

A LIFE'S LESSONS
COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.
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A LIFE'S LESSONS BY MRS. GORE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. I.

A LIFE'S LESSONS.

BY

MRS. GORE,

AUTHOR OF "CASTLES IN THE AIR," "MAMMON," &c.

"Il y a de la poésie dans ce tableau. La vie n'y dresse avec ses
ballons et ses paillettes; — mais toute saine, — incomplète, — comme
elle est réellement." — HALLAC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

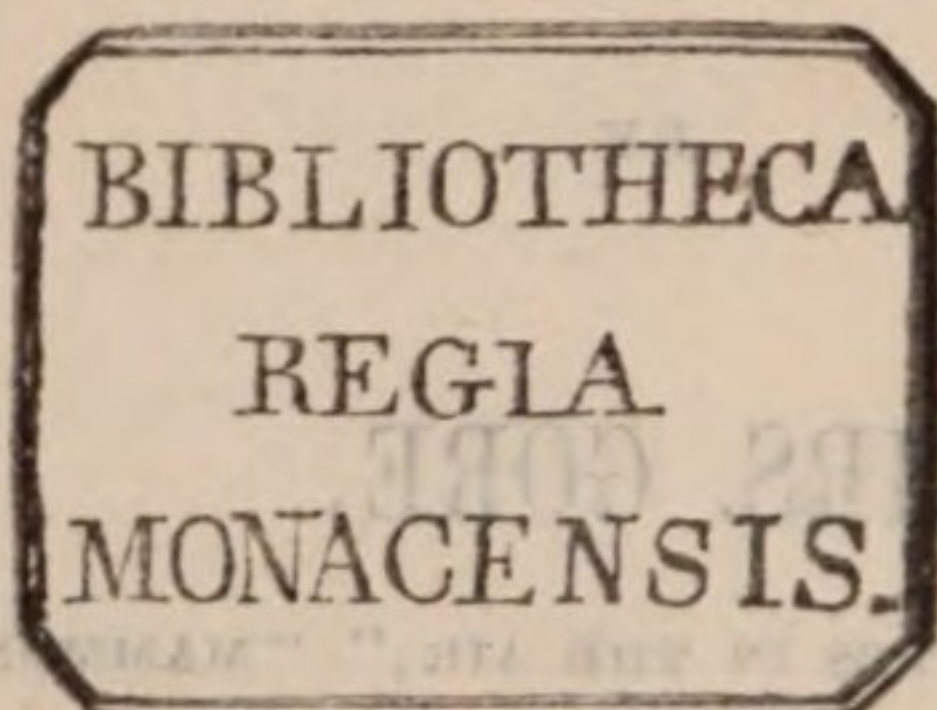
VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
AUTHORESS OF JANE EYRE,

THIS NOVEL,

WHICH, HAD SHE SURVIVED, WOULD HAVE BEEN
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IS INSCRIBED WITH THE SINCEREST SENTIMENTS OF
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A LIFE'S LESSONS.

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE enough in the aspect of Gridlands to justify even the most imaginative of mortals in selecting it as the home of a heroine: — a mean-looking house, two stories high, constructed, like all the other buildings and boundary-walls of the district, of dingy reddish stone; and opening on an ill-kept, unfrequented road, on the skirts of which were dotted the twenty or thirty tenements constituting the hamlet of Middledale.

Situated in one of those barren districts of North Lancashire, whose aridity affords so strange a contrast to the fertile landscapes of Lakeland, lying within half a day's journey, the long, narrow strip of pasture designated as "the Dale," was surrounded by lofty hills, never rising into sublimity, though inaccessible except as sheep-walks. Here and there, indeed, bold masses of granite obtruded to break the monotonous outline of the hill-side; and in places, rough thickets of furze afforded shelter to bird and beast. But trees there were none;

except a few detached and melancholy yews; and the screen of sycamores and limes that adorned the garden of Gridlands.

For, dreary as it looked, it *had* a garden. After passing through a small hall that divided the house, and the glass-door by which its southern access was effected, you found yourself in a sunny spot; a patchwork of cheerful flower-beds, shaded from the western sun, and sheltered from the far less acceptable easterly winds, by a mass of well-grown trees, contemporaries of the house, and the pride of the hamlet.

The garden sloped eastward to a beck or burn, scarcely deserving the name of stream; the stony fragments in the bed of which looked, in summer-time, like a long series of stepping-stones rising above the rapid but shallow waters. In winter, however, or after heavy rain, the beck assumed a will and a voice of its own; and nothing was then to be seen on the surface but eddies, and bubbles; with occasional patches of foam, betokening the force of the current as it battled along its uneasy bed.

Even the beck, however, scorned to adorn the unsightliness of that circumscribed landscape by such boons as Earth usually derives from its contact with Water. Not a wild flower along its banks. Only scattered fragments of stone, brought down from the hills, and left encumbering the meagre herbage, as if for the mere purpose of disfigurement.

At one extremity of the Dale, a dreary moor completed the desolation of the district. At the other, after winding along its tedious causeway for considerably more than a mile, the valley widened. Thickets of trees diversified the scene; and farmy fields — still, however, disfigured by low stone walls in place of the cheerful hedgerows of our southern counties — relieved the eye from the sense of barrenness and waste.

Far in the distance, a heavy line of woods was perceptible; and above them, the purple gleam of the Westmoreland mountains. But with these, the inhabitants of Middledale troubled themselves as little as with the misty clouds sailing over all. To obtain their daily bread by the sweat of their brows, demanded unremitting toil; and though mere hewers of wood and drawers of water would have been puzzled to find work in that barren and dry land, scanty but steady wages were to be earned in the stone and slate quarries. As regarded the female moiety of the community, in that remote district the spinning-wheel was not yet out of date.

The true origin of what, in spite of hard fare and constant labour, might be termed the prosperity of the hamlet, arose from the equality of its inhabitants. They were alike poor, ignorant, and contented. In more civilised places, every homestead has a character and atmosphere of its own. Middledale was as yet homogeneous: built upon common land, on which, from time

immemorial, squatters had constructed, with the materials lying on its surface, the hovels which constituted the hamlet; and though there occasionally arose a rumour that the agent of the Earl of Mardyke, lord of the adjoining moors and adjacent manor, was consulting "grand London lawyers" about establishing his right to the green ribbon of turf meandering between those lonesome hills, nothing ever came of it.

Two only of the inhabitants ever diverged so far from the Dale as the manufacturing town of Ilsington, situated at twelve miles distance: viz., the clergyman — or, as he was termed in the Dale, "the Pairson," and Michael Balfour, the proprietor of Gridlands; the latter, to dispose of his fleeces and the produce of his farm; the former, of the artificial flies of which, in spite of his calling, he was the best, and best-paid, manufacturer in the county.

The word "calling" is used advisedly, instead of the technical word "cloth;" because old David Hurdis was never seen, on week days, otherwise attired than in a Dalesman's blue smock-frock. Even on the Sabbath, his coat of frieze could scarcely pretend, either in colour or texture, to clerical dignity. But with twelve pounds sterling of yearly stipend to supply food and raiment, even the supplement of the little commercial speculation adverted to, did not enable him to aspire to "the cloth." — But superficial distinctions would have been out of place in the Dale.

The church in which he officiated might have been mistaken by a stranger for one of the rude hovels of his parishioners; but that, within its rough enclosure, in place of straggling rows of kail-plants or potato-furrows, a few slabs of stone or slate lay embedded in the turf. Without inscription. No "*Hic jacet*," no quotation from Sternhold or Hopkins. Yet not an inhabitant of Middledale but could assign a name to each. "*There* lay Martha Timbs — *there* old Joe Hurstone." More than half a century after a Dalesman was consigned to the dust, his memory remained green in the land.

Whether as "pairson" or workman, however, David Hurdis — (seldom styled the Reverend, except on the covers of county circulars, or letters that reached him once or twice a year from the rector of Mardyke, of which parish Middledale was a hamlet) — would have found it a hard matter to live, and above all to administer to the needs of his poorer neighbours, but for the generous aid of Gridlands. Not ostentatiously bestowed, but given, as by brother to brother. A portion of the farm and garden produce found its way as naturally to the Pairson's, as, on a summer evening, David Hurdis found his to the old lime-trees, under whose spreading boughs he and Michael Balfour smoked their pipes together; discussing the far-away world and its ways, much as more discursive philosophers descant upon the caves and mountains of the moon.

It is true that his studies at St. Bees had enlarged

the mind of the Pairson by knowledge, geographical and historical, undreamed of in the philosophy of the simple-minded farmer. But all speculative learning had been judiciously laid on the shelf by one whose ministry was appointed among the rude class in which he was born, and above which he did not aspire to rise. The perusal of the weekly county paper, which, when a week or two old, and well scented and streaked with tobacco, was forwarded to Gridlands by Rawson, the Ilsington cornchandler — with whom the Balfours kept up an interchange of homely gifts, — plump poultry and juicy fruit, — afforded their only insight into the progress of the world.

Such simplicity of life and manners has of late years been banished from the land we live in, by the facilities of railway communication. But, without entering into the vexed question of the tendency of such facilities to promote human improvement, certain it is that the want of a passable road, and the absence of a doctor, lawyer, or exciseman, produced no injurious effect on the health or morals of the Dale. With little to contend for, no one to encourage them to disputation, and not even an alehouse to do its part in exasperating their occasional squabbles, the Dalesmen maintained a Christianlike good-neighbourship, which philosophers may attribute to density of intellect, but which philosophers seldom accomplish.

One evening, towards midsummer, when the chilly spring was beginning to yield to the influence of the sun,

even in that ungenial latitude, so that the lime-trees were arrayed in tender verdure, and the white blossoms of the mountain-ash filled the air with sickly fragrance, David Hurdis made his way towards the stone bench under their branches, just as the stragglers from Mrs. Balfour's bee-hives were carrying home their last load of plunder. Though a work-day of the week, the Pairson wore his Sunday best; — coarse of texture at all times, but just then so considerably the worse for road-dust, that his elderly chum, aware that he had been on a visit to Ilsington (where Hurdis's only daughter was married to the Rawson already named), could not but attribute the unwonted haste of his friend to some matter of moment.

Yes, there was news: — pleasant, too, or David Hurdis's face would not have displayed a smile as genial as the light of the western sun glimmering through the lime-leaves. He did not, like more polished purveyors of intelligence, tantalise his friend by holding his curiosity at bay, but came straight to the point.

"Well, — it's a mercy I went yesterday, Michael," said he, dropping on the seat beside his host, who had welcomed him by a nod, without removing the pipe from his mouth. "Your good missus would have had me put off my journey till a shower or two had freshened the roads. But I arrived just in time to give a helping hand to a stroke of business that may be the better for all of us."

Even that satisfactory announcement produced no further demonstration on the part of Balfour, — always sedate, but at evening-tide rendered nearly comatose by toil and tobacco — beyond an interrogative elevation of the eyebrow.

“You’ve done nothing further, Michael, about the letting of Hawyer’s cottage?” inquired the Pairson.

And this time, his uncommunicative companion was forced to reply. Briefly enough, however. “Nothen!” said he, composedly. It was only the voluminous puff of smoke by which the word was prefaced, that seemed to invest it with importance.

“Then I fancy we’ve got a tenant for you.”

“Who’s *we*?”

“Myself and your friend, John Rawson; or, rather, your friend, John Rawson, and his correspondents at Liverpool, Macglashan and Thorp.”

“The ’torneys?”

“Ay! who’ve done John Rawson’s business for him this many a long year, and who put you in the way of that wool bargain, that turned out so famously.”

Balfour nodded, — a sufficient encouragement to his neighbour.

“When I got to Ilsington yesterday, I found Rawson and his wife confabulating over a letter they’d received from these lawyers; inquiring whether they knew hereabouts of a small quiet tenement, — house and garden,

— that could be hired by the year for the use of a widow lady in reduced circumstances.”

Another nod.

“Now I needn’t to tell you, Michael, that, except for the Christmas week they spend among us here, the Rawsons, husband and wife, never behold an inch wider of sky than covers the market-place of Illington. So right puzzled they were to hit on the thing wanted, which was to be situated in a village, and not on the outskirts of a market-town. But I set ’em at ease in a moment, by reminding Edith of the cottage, where, in old neighbour Hawyer’s time, she used to spend many and many’s the hour, gardening, with Alison Hawyer.”

“And they’ve writ word of the place to Liverpool?” inquired Michael.

“Not quite so fast. Folks must look afore they leap, and think afore they write; above all, when writing to lawyers. But I promised to make speed in letting you know what was wanted; that you might fix your price, and, if agreeable, nail your tenant.”

“Can’t but say that a good tenant would be acceptable,” replied Michael, shaking the ashes from his pipe. “The house has stood empty since Candlemas: and I was even thinking of letting Ralph Hubbersty have it, for the rent he offered two terms back, only that his wife’s a bit of a slattern, and a bigger bit of a scold; and my missus don’t want neither o’ such too nigh to Gridlands.”

"I should be sorry to stand in Ralph's light, poor fellow, whose lot, I'm afeard, is a bad one" — the Pairson was beginning.

"But you *won't* stand in his light. A bad tenant is worse than none at all. I've an odd groat or two in my pocket that saves me from need of settling a noisy jade like Dorcas Hubbersty within hearing of my chimney-corner."

"The tenant proposed by the Liverpool lawyers will be quiet enough; — a decayed gentlewoman, it seems, — conditioning only for cheap and quiet quarters."

"I've not much leaning towards decayed gentlefolks," retorted Michael, bluntly; "they're apt to give more fash than they're worth. They can't forget, and seldom learn. We shall find her, maybe, some crusty, old lady, showing airs and discontents to her betters."

"No, no. — This Mrs. Varnham is far under forty, — a poor ailing creature, who has seen better times. And, Michael, I was thinking, while John Rawson read aloud the letter, that a lady-born, and lady-educated, would afford better company in a year or so for little Nannie, than to have her running wild in the village, as my poor Edith used to do, with such rough companions as Alison Hawyer."

"I don't want Nannie to grow up a better woman than John Rawson's wife," said Michael, kindly.

"John Rawson's wife is fitted to be John Rawson's wife; and a capital one, and a happy one, thank God,

she makes him. But Rawson took her when his own head was scarce above the world, without a farthing in her pocket; and it behoved *her* to be thrifty and hard-working, rather than a scholar. 'Twon't be so with Nannie, Michael Balfour. Nannie will be rich. Nannie will be an heiress."

Michael Balfour indulged in a disapproving grunt.

"*She* has better prospects before her than to slave away her life in a back-shop in Ilsington. A good girl, the best of girls, she is growing up under the care of her excellent mother. But still, if this stranger, this Mrs. Varnham, should be the well-taught lady described in Macglashan's letter —"

"*That* needn't weigh in the lease," rejoined Balfour. "We an't given — my missus and me — to talk about our family matters; and there's many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip; which makes it idle havers to prate about what's to come. But I may as well tell you now, David, what you'll see afore long, — that when our Nannie reaches twelve year old, she's to go and bide at Manchester, with her aunt Hildyard, for the benefit of a few years' schooling."

This was indeed a startling piece of news to David Hurdis. Little Nannie was almost as a child of his own, and he liked not the thoughts of parting with her.

"My missus and her sister, Dorty, you see, waited, on their grandmother's account, till they were something past young afore they married," continued Michael; "and

just as *we* have neither chick nor child but Nannie, there's only one son to succeed to Hildyard's great business."

"And you mean to make a match between the cousins, I see, I see!" cried the Pairson — a new light brightening his mind and countenance.

"I don't *mean* nothing about it, man," rejoined Michael, peevishly. "As I whiles said to you, betwixt the cup and the lip, there's many a slip. But maybe the sisters *have* talked over such a plan; and if young Hildyard should grow up an honest, likely fellow, I have nought to say against a match that would bring the two halves of old Madam Verhout's savings back again into a lump."

"With the addition of the fine business of Hildyard and Co! No bad look-out, certainly. And well cared for our little lass will be, under the watchful eye of aunt Dorty. So, on *that* point we need say no more in relation to the tenant of Hawyer's cottage. — After all, Michael, the best thing you can do, is to address your answer and inquiries to Macglashan and Thorp, and settle the business to your own liking."

The summer twilight was by this time fading into dusk; so that the approach of Nannie Balfour to summon her father and his friend to the household supper might have passed unnoticed, but for the gentle caress with which her message was delivered to old Michael. Her step was noiseless on the gravel; for though so young in

years, there was in little Nannie a total absence of the buoyancy of girlhood. Even as a child, she was as composed as is usually the case with the offspring of elderly parents. A certain squareness of figure and waxenness of complexion, was, perhaps, attributable to the Dutch blood flowing in her veins. But the sweetest of tempers, and sweetest of voices, imparted peculiar charm to this grave and quiet girl; — growing up in the monotonous routine of household life at Gridlands, as identical with her homely father and mother, as the branch of an oak, in bark and foliage, with its parent tree.

CHAPTER II.

BUT before the interest of the reader is bespoken for Nannie, something should be said of her progenitors; nay, even of the absentee family, the Van der Helde of Hawkshill, under whose auspices they had been naturalised in the county.

Tradition asserted — and most knowledge was traditional in the Dale — that the original Jacob van der Helde, by whom the now dilapidated mansion at Hawkshill was erected, was a Dutch physician; imported by William of Orange, with the Keppels and Bentincks, and eventually rewarded for his services by a grant of certain forfeited estates in Lancashire, whereof those who considered themselves the lawful owners, were serving the ex-monarch who brandished his gratuitous sceptre at St. Germain. A British Baronetcy had accompanied the donation; and the Lady van der Helde, whose portrait, in blue satin and swan's-down, had been smiling in one of the mildewed oaken parlours at Hawkshill for a century and a half, albeit the puffy daughter of a Guelderland burgomaster, had lived and died a life of subsidiary courtiership at Hampton Court.

It was to console himself, perhaps, for the untimely loss of his royal master, that Sir Jacob, retreating hastily

to his northern estates, laid the foundations of a mansion which, affecting to unite the Dutch and English styles of architecture, produced a hybrid more monstrous in ugliness than even the choicest specimens of that tasteless epoch extant in either country.

To mark his contempt of the stone lying within a few feet of the surface, on the Hawkshill estate, Sir Jacob went to a vast expense in order to procure the brightest of red brick, and whitest of stone coping; and if the house itself was tall and narrow of frontage, the windows with which it was pierced were sufficiently numerous for any extent of *façade*. A double flight of steep steps led to a mean entrance-door; the heavy stone balustrade closely resembling a series of aldermen's legs, in gouty stockings.

Within doors, wainscoting prevailed; and the narrow windows, numerous as they were, scarcely afforded light or air sufficient for the lofty chambers. — Without, straight gravel walks and formal parterres, dotted with yew and box, and diversified with occasional leaden figures and vases, exhibited an exact *fac-simile* of the Lust-Haus of Lady van der Helde's family, in the suburbs of Utrecht; from whence were annually imported the largest and most vivid crocuses that endeavoured to outshine the sun in King William's British dominions.

By the son and grandson of the court physician, the house at Hawkshill was carefully kept up; and the estate improved and augmented. But though the frogs con-

tinued to croak in the pools and canals with which Sir Jacob had adorned his pleasaunce, and though the amount of simpering or staring family-portraits enlivening the wainscots of oak and cedar, were more than doubled, the living line stopped short. The Dutch race did not prosper in its intermarriages with the darkbrowed daughters of Cumbrian squires. The last Sir Jacob van der Helde died childless, just about the time when the remains of George the Second were consigned to the royal vault.

At the time of his decease, rumours prevailed in the neighbourhood that the old Dutchman had made what certain Jacobite nobles of the neighbouring county called "restitution;" by bequeathing the property of Hawkshill, with its augmentations and benefits, to what they termed the rightful owner; namely, to a young Catholic esquire, who, though considerably out at elbows, would have been loth to exchange his more genial existence at Rome for the fogs of a heretic land. — Others declared, more especially the Mayor and Corporation of Ilsington, that, failing male heirs, the estate had lapsed to the crown. It was even whispered that court favour was likely again to govern its destinies. A Stuart of Glen Something — a fifteenth cousin to the unpopular Marquis of Bute — was named as the new grantee.

But in process of time — in process of a very few weeks — there arrived a beetle-browed cousin from Utrecht, a Jonkheer van der Helde, armed with parch-

ments sufficient to cover the estate; to whom, even had not his heir-at-law-ship sufficed, the deceased baronet had formally bequeathed every acre and stuyver in his power.

By this arrangement, all hope of Anglicising the place was lost. Hawkshill was destined to remain as Dutch as one of Van Hooghe's pictures; and the Jonkheer and his young wife having brought with them, from their amphibious country, a whole household of domestics, the bricks were ruddled anew, and the yews and box-trees clipped into all their pristine unsightliness.

Among these servants was one Mitje Verhout, the foster-sister and favourite waiting-maid of the new lady of Hawkshill; and a great satisfaction it appeared to young Van der Helde, who was well content to exchange what Voltaire describes as the "*canards, canaux, canaille,*" of his native country, for the well-drained acres of an English estate, to have secured a sympathising auditress for the perpetual grumblings of his wife over the slovenly, thriftless habits of English life. The two good housewives, Mitje and her mistress, were never weary of shrugging their shoulders at the contemptible supply of coarse house-linen which only half-filled the huge walnut-wood presses of Hawkshill, though they would have sufficed any other family in the county for half-a-dozen generations. As to the dairy-department, the new lady of the manor blushed to be connected with a family who had turned those fertile pastures to such miserable account.

Mitje's mistress, like the anointed sovereign whom Madame de Sévigné calls "*cet enragé de Prince d'Orange*," was, in truth, a reformer at heart. She soon set to work in good earnest. The huckaback of the presses gave place to damask: and the *pärterre* grew bright with the choicest tulips and hyacinths. The butter beaten under Mitje's superintendence was pronounced to be too rich for the Ilsington market; and the dry-rubbed floors might have furnished slides to the Dutch servants deprived of their national pastime of skaiting; while every deal-board in the house was pipe-clayed into the whiteness of marble. There wanted only a cricket in a bead-cage, and a quail in a wicker one, to render the keeping-room of Mitje a complete *fac-simile* of a household chamber in Amsterdam.

Forty years passed away — forty years and more — under the sober and frugal presidency of these matter-of-fact people. At the commencement of the present century, Hawkshill was inhabited by another matron of the house of Van der Helde, and another Mitje; only that the old Dutch name had become Anglicised into Madge; while the limitation of the patent of Baronetcy conferred on the family, converted the present proprietress into plain Mistress or Madam.

But though these transitions and this lapse of time are easily glided over in print, they had not been untroubled by the political storms which distracted the concluding quarter of the last century. The Netherlands

and the Van der Helde had both suffered. — The Stadtholder himself was eating the bitter bread of banishment at Hampton Court; and the son of the old lady resident at Hawkshill, defending his native soil against Gallic innovation. — Mrs. van der Helde expired in her English home, a few weeks after learning the elevation of Louis Bonaparte to the new-fangled throne of Holland.

Like most aged people — nay, like most people in those times — she regarded his Napoleonic majesty's coronation as a final measure; and considered the nationality of her country as utterly lost. In her last interview with Jakes Zelters, a wealthy Dutch merchant, entrusted, time immemorial, with the affairs of the Van der Helde family, who was summoned from his compting-house in the Barbican to attend her death-bed, she made it her earnest request that Hawkshill should be carefully kept up, to become the residence of her son and his family, when they took refuge in England from the exactions of the new dynasty.

Till then, her trusty Madge Verhout was to remain in possession, with a suitable stipend and attendance; and the last act of the old lady was to sign a testamentary paper, bequeathing to her faithful servant, and in reversion to her two granddaughters, Madge and Dorthy, the children of a deceased son, a handsome sum, arising from the savings of her dower; together with her extensive wardrobe, and a considerable amount of household gear.

In four years' time, the new King of Holland abdicated in favour of an infant son, predestined to a far more elevated grade in the history of nations. But this event made as little difference to Madge, or, as she was more respectfully termed by the executor and the household, Madam Verhout, as to the venerable lady slumbering in the family vault. The heir of Hawkshill was too good a patriot to desert the stormy councils and stagnant waters of the Hague; and nothing was heard of him at Hawkshill, except through the half-yearly audit of his agent aforesaid, the careful old merchant of the Barbican; whose visits to the decaying mansion constituted the grand event of its year.

For these occasions only, did its chimnies smoke, and the spits and stewpans revive their ancient cunning. Though twenty years junior to her deceased lady, Madam Verhout fully equalled her in thrift and formality; and the pride of her life was to return to the hands of Zelters and Co., Christmas after Christmas, half of the sum assigned by her careful mistress for the maintenance of Hawkshill. But the house, and Madge and Dorty, were the sufferers. — In their household labours, they were assisted only by a single servant: and were consequently compelled to work as unintermittingly as though they were not heiresses to thousands and thousands of florins, and hundreds and hundreds of yards of old mechin and brocade.

All the better. They had no leisure to discover and

descant upon the dreariness of Hawkshill, and the stinginess of their grand-mother. Such a mode of existence moulded their natures to habits of industry and patience. From children, they became women, without passing through the pleasant limbo of girlhood: sober, self-denying women, whose beauty, like the flowers in the deserted garden of Hawkshill, bloomed and paled, and waned, without having delighted one human eye, or called forth a single joyful salutation. Their immurement was all but conventual. The warble of the woodlands was their music; the breath of the cows, their perfume. In the most glorious sunset, Madge and Dorty Verhout saw only the close of a laborious day.

Sincerely attached, however, to the grandame by whom, at the death of their parents, they had been rescued from want, the passive obedience of the sisters was no sacrifice. They would have considered it a breach of filial duty to disturb the even tenour of the old lady's declining years by any change tending to disunite her little household.

Both had refused advantageous offers of marriage. Michael Balfour, the middle-aged son of an old Scotch bailiff imported half a century before from the Lothians by the house of Zelters, and who, during his prolonged stewardship of the Hawkshill estate, had scraped together the means of creating Gridlands farm, had been for years a suitor to Madge; while her sister was solemnly courted, per post, by a thriving Manchester draper, who

had visited Hawkshill, many years before, as commercial traveller to the merchant of the Barbican.

The sisters, however, were unanimous in their resolve to abide, for the remainder of her days, by their grandame. "*On broute où l'on est attaché,*" and Hawkshill was their appointed home. Year after year, with Dutch pertinacity, they renewed their original resolution. Even the accession of Michael Balfour to the undivided throne of Gridlands, and Hildyard's to the rule of his father's compters, failed to mollify their firm negatives. Neither sister seemed inclined to risk the resignation of the old lady and her hoards to the charge of the other; and they adhered to their obstinate spinsterhood, till the bloom and elasticity of youth had vanished. Their sole recreation consisted in periodical visits to old Madam Verhout's treasury; airing the obsolete brocades and velvets, and passing in review the antique lace, trinkets, napery, and porcelain; the latter being of that precious kind with which Holland, through its commerce with China and Japan, was the first to turn the brains of European dowagers.

There was something in their nature singularly congenial with the stillness of poor deserted Hawkshill. They were afraid neither of the echoes of its grim chambers, nor of the moss-grown river-gods, and crumbling wood nymphs, sharing with them the solitude of its lonely gardens. For when at length an attack of rheumatic gout proved stronger than their poor old grandmother's

determination to survive till she was able to resign the trust reposed in her into the hands of its lawful possessor, they fulfilled the promises of their troth-plight with anything but alacrity. But no proposal was made them, on the part of the trustees, to succeed to the confidential post of the deceased. Zelters and Co. appeared of opinion that the family had extracted quite enough out of Hawkshill. At nearly forty years of age therefore, Dory and Madge Verhout had nothing left for it but to divide between them, according to the terms of their grandmother's will, the bequest of the late Mrs. Van der Helde; the exact amount of which was never known save to themselves, and Jakes Zelters, their trustee.

In the course of the following year, the sisters were living at forty miles' distance from each other, yet far as the poles asunder; — the one married to a wealthy Manchester tradesman, — the other to the sober-sided Michael Balfour of Gridlands.

CHAPTER III.

Thus much in explanation of the sedate deportment and un-childlike countenance of Nannie Balfour. Thus much in explanation of the comparative opulence and comfort pervading Gridlands farm. The grave child was the offspring of middle-aged parents; and the middle-aged parents were secured from all anxiety concerning the year's crops, or the fluctuations of the Ilsington corn-market, by a more than decent independence.

So tranquil, indeed, and so unclouded, had been the married life of Madge Verhout, that now, at more than fifty years of age, she looked younger and far more healthful than when she quitted the stove-heated atmosphere of Hawkshill. Fresh air and free exercise had brightened her up; and though some years elapsed after her marriage before the birth of Nannie — while Mrs. Hildyard had produced a son within a year of her translation to the city of towering chimneys, — both herself and her little daughter were pictures of health; whereas, after the birth of Elisha Hildyard, his mother declined at once into an aged woman.

The difficulty of rearing the sickly boy, indeed, might have added twenty years to those of even more robust parents. But each sister was convinced, like the owl,

that her own fledgeling was the fairest bird that ever flew, and that if they survived to maturity, they would be worthy of each other; for it had long been decided between them that their merits and fortunes were to be reconsolidated by an early marriage.

Mrs. Balfour was, therefore, as little open to conviction as her husband, when her spiritual pastor attempted to satisfy her of the benefits likely to accrue to her daughter from the arrival of the new tenant of Hawyer's cottage. In her married as in her spinster life, Madge was reserved and taciturn. She listened without remonstrance to the pastor's hints concerning the gentility of the newcomer. Conscious that in spite of her broad dialect and tanned arms, the destinies of the little girl who was contentedly munching by their side the bread and butter, in the manufacture of which they had both assisted, were already secured, she dreaded the innovations likely to follow the intrusion of a lady into the Dale.

Poor as this Mrs. Varnham might be, it did not follow that she was humble. She might be as proud of her gentility as the Hildyards were of their warehouse. Though respect for the Pairson, who possessed over her mind a double influence, produced by his sacred calling and straightforward simplicity of character, forbade open dissent, she could not help wishing that he had been a little less free in undertaking in her name friendly offices towards the stranger.

"There's too much of the Good Samaritan in my friend Michael," observed David Hurdis, "and too womanly a heart in my friend Michael's wife, to admit of doubting that they will lend a helping hand to this poor widow."

"Wait and see whether it suits her to be helped," answered Michael, not unfrequently forced by the cold silence of his wife to become spokesman for the family. "In my country, that is, in my fore-elders' country, the poorer the prouder."

"In all countries, Satan is only too apt to sow the seed of so besetting a sin," rejoined the Pairson. "Some people are proud of their silver and gold; some, of their right to stand at the king's right hand; some, of their virtues; some, of their knowledge; some, of their thrift and industry." (A slight glance at Madge, as she was gravely re-filling the tea-pot, seemed to direct towards herself this last clause of his homily.) "But spiritual pride, or mercenary, or any other, is alike sinful in the eyes of God. Let us hope that the new companion to whom He requires us to administer the mercies due to a fellow-creature in distress, may be so qualified by nature, as to convert the duty into a pleasure."

Mrs. Balfour felt rebuked. But this did not dispose her more kindly towards the new-comer. She almost wished herself back in the lonely old hall at Hawkshill, to escape the criticism and scorn of the new-fangled stranger, of whom it was insinuated that her language and manners might afford a better example to Nannie

than those of her mother. — Her mind misgave her that the comfort of the Dale was at an end. Jealousies and heart-burnings would arise. Her child — even her husband — might learn to despise her own homely ways. For days and days she pondered over this; till bed and board became embittered by envious mistrust.

Old Martha, the hard-working servant, who had accompanied her from Hawkshill, began to fear that some family calamity was impending; so peevish was the mood of her usually unexcitable mistress.

Having never been brought face to face with anything bearing the designation of a lady-born, saving the stately portraits adorning the chamber at Hawkshill, in their Kneller-like robes of satin, looped with strings of pearl, Mrs. Balfour was, perhaps, under some apprehension that the Pairson's protégée would make her appearance in robes of estate, with a fan of peacocks' feathers in her hand; for a secret visit to her own stores of superannuated finery probably purported to ascertain whether they contained any pinnars, or laces, or embroidered aprons, not too gorgeous to be assumed, with a view to raise herself a trifle nearer the level of her rival.

The provoking part of the crisis was, that not a word more did David Hurdis waste upon the matter. As to her husband, no sooner was the lease of Hawyer's cottage signed and witnessed, than he went his way to the fields, without seeming to know there was a widow

Varnham in the world. Once, when Mrs. Balfour remarked, half interrogatively, that the Pairson would like enow go and fetch over from Ilsington his new parishioner, Michael removed the pipe from his mouth to answer, — “More like, the poor soul, being delicate, will come in Shuldham’s gig from the Black Lion, where the Manchester day-coach puts up.”

“Why not borrow the mayor’s charott at once?” retorted his wife, so bitterly, that her unwonted want of charity must have been discerned even by her husband, had not his faculties been thoroughly engrossed by the composition of a top-dressing for a new enclosure.

Next day, having dispatched Martha and the little girl to a sick woman, at the furthest end of the village, with some fruit and farm produce, she indulged herself without restraint in the petty vanity of arranging to the best advantage, in the glazed cupboard gracing the corner of her sombre parlour, the tiny cups of dragon china, strange teapots, and enamelled salt-cellars, which constituted part of her Dutch inheritance; setting her house in order, to meet the scrutiny of the supercilious stranger.

But she had accomplished this, and more: had carefully dusted the be-hieroglyphed face of her eight-day clock, and dislodged the flies and midges from an elaborate bouquet of shell-work, which bloomed in unchanging hideousness on the chimney-shelf; yet, no

Martha, no Nannie returned! — The cleansed dial-plate certified the lapse of a whole hour. — Still, no Nannie!

The good mother grew anxious. — Punctuality was an essential part of her life of routine; and Martha, who had obeyed her implicitly for the last thirty years, was as steady as the clock. — What could have delayed her? — Though the searching afternoon sun of the dog-days was shining so bright upon the road, that its whiteness was dazzling, the anxious woman threw open her housedoor to peer out and see whether any trace of the truants was discernible.

What she beheld served only to convert her fears into anguish. — Martha, *alone*, was approaching, with hurried but uncertain steps; running wildly for a few yards: then, pausing for breath. As she drew nearer, Mrs. Balfour perceived that the old woman's apron was smeared with blood! —

Where — where — was the child! — What terrible accident had befallen them! —

"A judgment upon me," suggested the fainting heart of the terrified mother; "a judgment for my want of charity towards a stranger in distress!"

By the time the panting Martha reached the door, her mistress was nearly as breathless as herself. She could scarcely articulate the inquiry of — "Where have you left Nannie?"

"With the leddy."

"The lady?"

"She's met wi' an unked accident."

"My poor, poor little girl."

"Na, na, mistress. The straange leddy."

Mrs. Balfour receded hastily into the house. She could afford to defer the rest of Martha's story till she had hastily swallowed a cup of water.

She could even afford to listen with becoming sympathy; and was soon as busily employed as Martha had anticipated, in sorting medicaments, and lint, and linen rollers. In spite of the heat of the day, and the weight of the basket on her arm, she was off to Hawyer's cottage at a pace that might have almost distanced the gig of the Black Lion; in which she now earnestly wished that the unfortunate Mrs. Varnham had accomplished her journey. For it appeared that the cart, to which she had entrusted her person and goods, had broken down, half way through the village. When Martha and the little girl accidentally reached the scene of the disaster, the carter, aided by the inmates of the nearest hovel, was endeavouring to release the body of the ill-fated stranger from a huge chest under which she lay crushed and senseless.

It was an unlucky moment for an accident. The Dalesmen were at work in the quarries; — Pairson Hurdis was on his outlying round of duty; — Michael Balfour in the fields. Not a soul to mount the coultter horse and ride off to Ilsington for the resident surgeon,

Dr. Moss; whose professional services the slender means of Middledale rarely called into request.

All the better, perhaps, for the sufferer. Mrs. Balfour, thrown on her own resources, went composedly to work with fomentations and potations. Assisted by Martha, she installed the scarcely conscious stranger in her new habitation; rendered more comfortable in a few hours by contributions from the Gridlands homestead, than it would have become in many weeks by the exertions of the poor gentlewoman.

When Dr. Moss made his appearance on the morrow, it was only to pronounce that all had been done for the best, and to assure his old friend Mike Balfour's wife, that she deserved a diploma. Even Nannie, who, gravely stationed by the bedside of the sufferer with a cup of cowslip tea in her fussy hands, was recognised by the Illington professional as the only Middledalian he had introduced into the world, was commended as the most helpful of nurses.

The poor sufferer, whose voice had been as yet uplifted only in moans, heard, and was grateful.

She thanked God in her heart of hearts that in the strange and uninviting spot where her destinies were appointed, she had found friends: Good Samaritans, at all events, whose charitable offices it would depend upon herself to convert into friendship. Of Mrs. Balfour, so taciturn though so careful in her attendance, she stood as yet a little in awe. Even the little girl waited upon

her in unchildlike silence. And when, the second night, the mother and daughter, in taking leave of her, pressed her feverish hand, and whispered that Martha would watch by her side in their place, and summon them when wanted, it was a relief to her to be alone with the old woman. Through her, she had no difficulty in procuring a permanent servant, who would render her independent of the services of Gridlands.

In a few days' time Mrs. Varnham contrived, by her patient instructions to the strong-armed girl selected for her by Martha, to place her new abode, and the belongings which were to render it tenantable, in some sort of order.

As she lay there, helpless and suffering, she managed to have her few articles of furniture decently distributed. And no sooner did the wealthy proprietress of Gridlands perceive their more than homely texture, than she took shame to herself for her preconceived envy, hatred, and uncharitableness. She even wondered how any one, not absolutely a pauper, could have thought such a chest of drawers, such a field bed, and such a shabby tea-table, worth the cost of transport.

But she was not the less favourably inclined towards her poor neighbour for this disclosure of her neediness. Above all, it grieved her to perceive how, in the intensest of her suffering, the widow's chief anxiety was to dissuade those around her from sending a second time

for Dr. Moss. The expense of such a luxury was evidently not to be thought of.

No such tax upon her narrow means, however, was projected. The worthy doctor, foreseeing in the cart-traveller a very unprofitable patient, had judiciously imparted to Mrs. Balfour the instructions indispensable to the progressive treatment of the invalid: admonishing her that absolute repose was the chief thing needful; that the illness of the unfortunate Mrs. Varnham would be a long one; and that she might, perhaps, become a cripple for life.

CHAPTER IV.

For once, medical prognostications proved authentic. Weeks, months, passed away, and Mrs. Varnham still lay extended on her couch. The best of the ground-floor rooms, the first into which she had been moved, was her day and night abode; — Dinah, the strong-armed servant girl, inhabiting a chamber divided from it only by a narrow passage. The upper story was occupied by the scanty remainder of her baggage.

By the time winter arrived, and fortunately for the invalid it proved a mild one, or the bitter air and discomfort of Middledale might have wrought upon her so as to supersede all further necessity for Dr. Moss's periodical visits, the sick room had acquired something of the air of snugness so prized by the Balfours, and so peculiar to feminine jurisdiction. Small as it was, strict tidiness seemed to extend its limits; and the clean white dimity covers contributed by Gridlands, and a few choice volumes belonging to the stranger, carefully arranged upon them by Nannie, converted even the rickety chest of drawers into an ornament. A turf fire glowed cheerfully on the hearth; and the kettle singing beside it, added to the subdued but unremitting vocal efforts of

Dinah in the kitchen beyond, afforded sound and solace in the silent house.

For even Nannie, so habitually quiet, walked softer, and spoke lower, the moment she entered Hawyer's Cottage. She seemed to understand that she was there only to assuage pain, and comfort sorrow. David Hurdis, when, in his visits of spiritual consolation to his new parishioner, he noticed the devoted attendance of the little girl, could not refrain from placing his hand in benediction on her young head, in recognition of the pious charity and instinctive delicacy evinced in her conduct.

But the truth was, that to Nannie, whose faculties were just then in process of active development, Mrs. Varnham was an object of more than commiseration. She was the first educated lady the girl had ever seen; and the refinement of feature, gentleness of deportment, nay, the very dialect and intonation of the stranger, exercised a powerful charm over her mind. As a work of art might influence a more accomplished proficient, the manner of that gentle woman fascinated the child. Accustomed only to the broad faces and coarse features of the Dalesfolk, the delicate lineaments of Mrs. Varnham were to her as the face of an angel. Even such, had been manifested in her childish dreams of the inhabitants of a higher sphere. Just so sweetly cadenced a voice had spoken to her fancy, when, after vainly endeavouring to follow the Pairson in his recitation of the mystic

chapters of St. John, she had resigned her youthful fancy to ecstatic visions.

Sometimes, when Mrs. Varnham was sleeping soundly, under the influence of the opiates administered to her, Nanny would gently draw aside the curtain and contemplate her attenuated face and small white hands; with all the reverence bestowed by a Catholic votary on the effigy of the Mater Dolorosa. — She seemed too wan and wasted for a being of this world.

With Nannie, this unearthly slightness passed for the result of the sufferings consequent on her frightful accident. A more experienced observer would have discerned that its origin was far anterior. Those hollow eyes were worn by early tears. Those slender hands had been long accustomed to clasp each other in devout humility. But not even to David Hurdis, with whom, in consequence of their spiritual intercourse, Mrs. Varnham conversed far more freely than with any other person in the Dale, did she ever breathe a syllable of her birth or fortunes. She seemed to date her existence from the disastrous day of coming among them.

But it was scarcely possible to be more uncomplaining. The cold gravity of Mrs. Balfour probably appeared to the invalid to be the result of her weary task of nursing. For the moment the good woman made her appearance — seldom without a gift in her hand — the sick woman endeavoured to brighten up; to make little of her pains, and much of her gratitude; above all, much of her thank-

fulness, to Gridlands for allowing her to enjoy so much of Nannie's company. There was something as soothing as profitable to her, she said, in the presence of a child.

As she grew stronger, and more capable of self-assistance, fearing that less of this solace might be vouchsafed by Michael Balfour and his wife, she attempted to propitiate their indulgence by rendering the visits of Nannie advantageous to the child as well as pleasant to herself. — Scarcely were her duffle cloak and coarse straw bonnet hung upon the pegs appropriated to them, and her snow-shoes put aside, that her little frozen feet might be made to glow beside the hearth, when some dainty piece of needle-work, already prepared for her by Mrs. Varnham, was placed in her hands; and while she worked on, proud and pleased, her friend read aloud to her, from pious books; or recited ballads and poems suitable to her apprehension; the soft pure English accent of the reader being as music to ears accustomed only to the harsh guttural dialect of North Lancashire.

One day, when the Pairson had found the scholar and preceptress thus employed, Mrs. Varnham, after the departure of the child let fall (in answer to David Hurdis's expressions of gratitude for the pains she was bestowing on his promising favourite) an avowal of her misgivings, whether she did right in inspiring the child with tastes superior to those of her parents, — those good neighbours to whom she was so largely indebted.

"I am afraid," said she, cheerfully, "that Nannie will not become the more zealous dairy-woman, for learning to love cross-stitch and Wordsworth."

"Set your mind at ease on that score, my good lady," was the old man's reply. "Few, even of those who are born to labour, are the worse for having their thoughts exalted. But this child is born to a life of ease. The Balfours, though frugal and simple, are able to make a lady of her. Nannie Balfour is not destined to live and die at Gridlands."

Mrs. Varnham was pleased. Thenceforward she felt authorised to gratify her tastes without injury to her little protégée. Before the spring arrived, — before Dr. Moss had ventured, at his farewell visit, to promise the invalid that before autumn, she might, perhaps, with the aid of crutches, move from one room into another, — Nannie had become a skilful embroideress; and could repeat with discretion more hymns and verses than her mother had previously believed to exist in the English tongue.

One of the circumstances which bound the child closest to her instructress, was compassion for her utter isolation. Everybody but this new neighbour seemed endowed with family affection. She had her kind parents to love; her parents were happy and hopeful in herself. His reverence possessed, in the Market Place at Ilstington, an unbounded treasury of grandchildren, to be cared for and prayed for. — Even Dorcas Hubbersty, the scold,

was sometimes softened by the sicknesses of her offspring; and the offspring were occasionally rewarded for submission to her rage by an outburst of maternal tenderness.

But the lame woman at Hawyer's Cottage seemed to have no living soul to care for. Not a letter ever reached her; — not so much as an old newspaper or casual parcel from the market-town. The supply of money she brought with her sufficed her needs; except on one occasion, when, at the close of Dr. Moss's attendance, a cheque arrived, through John Rawson, from the Liverpool attorneys, Macglashan and Thorp, to satisfy his claim. — But, from month's end to month's end, no word of kindred tenderness was addressed to the ear or eye of the cripple.

The humane little girl was deeply touched by this desolation.

One day, however, Mrs. Varnham, having engaged to assist her in the manufacture of a needle-book, to be presented to her mother on her birth-day, a shade of silk was wanting to complete the embroidery of a bunch of violets on the green cover, which was not to be found in her workbasket.

"How vexatious!" exclaimed poor Nannie, as much disappointed as was compatible with her serene nature. "The day after to-morrow is mother's birthday, and there is no time to write to Mrs. Rawson. I *did* so want to get my needle-book finished. She would have been so surprised — so pleased!" —

"I almost hope," said Mrs. Varnham, smiling at her eagerness, "that there are some remnants of floss-silk in a workbox which still remains in my travelling trunk. I should not like Dinah to turn over my things, Nannie. But you are so careful, that to *you* I can entrust the key. Open the large black box in the room above, my child, and near the top, you will find a tortoiseshell case. Among the cards of silk it contains, we shall find, perhaps, what is wanting."

In a very few minutes, the little girl was again beside the easy-chair to which the cripple had been recently promoted, to deliver back the key, and proclaim with a beaming countenance that she had brought down half-a-dozen shades of violet embroidering-silk.

For a time, both were engrossed by the resumption of their task. The silks were assorted. The needle-book was in process of completion.

"Are you aware," said Nannie, after a quarter of an hour's silent industry, "that there are two things in the workbox, besides the silks I brought down?"

Mrs. Varnham raised her languid eyes from her work, — perhaps a little anxiously.

"One is a silken bag, — so sweet, — smelling like mother's clove carnations!" —

"A scent-bag!" replied Mrs. Varnham, a little amused that such an object should never have met the unsophisticated eyes of Nannie.

"The other is a little wee-wee picture."

Mrs. Varnham smiled no longer, but silently resumed her work.

"Perhaps you did not wish me to see it," resumed the candid girl. "But I could not help it. — It lay, in its gold rim, open among the reels and cards."

"I had no objection to your seeing it," said the invalid, in a depressed voice. "It is the portrait of my son."

"Your son?" exclaimed the girl, the reel of silk she was unwinding dropping from her hand. "That beautiful little child, with gold-coloured hair, and such a smiling, happy face, *your* son?"

Mrs. Varnham gently nodded assent.

"But why have you never talked to us about him? — Why did you never say you had a little boy? — Perhaps, dear Mrs. Varnham, perhaps he is no longer alive?" —

There was some warranty for the supposition, for the widow's tears were by this time slowly dropping upon her work.

"No, Nannie! — I have not lost him. God be praised, Maurice is alive and well; though no longer the little golden-haired babe represented in that miniature."

"But why don't he live with you? — Why do you never mention him?" — persisted the little girl, whose interest in the subject a little exceeded her discretion.

"Maurice lives with a near relative of mine, who is more able to support him than I am; — a relative who

can bestow upon him what is better than silver or gold — a first-rate education."

"Still, no relative can be like a mother," remonstrated Nannie. And the tears came into her own eyes, at the thought that this lonely widow — this self-denying woman — had renounced the companionship of her beautiful boy, for *his* benefit and advantage.

"I am very poor, Nannie," said Mrs. Varnham, replying as it were to her thoughts. "It would not have been fair to Maurice to make him share my hardships, when comfort and cultivation awaited him elsewhere."

"I would rather live with my parents, were they ever so poor," said the little girl. "I should hate to be enjoying myself at a distance, if they were pining and miserable at home."

"Maurice had no choice in the matter. I parted with him many years ago. That neither of us may feel our separation, it is thought better that we should rarely meet," said the invalid, in a more depressed voice.

"Thought *better*," — Nannie was beginning; but apparently Mrs. Varnham had said as much as her feelings would allow.

"It is a painful subject. Let us drop it, Nannie," she interposed, as if to check all further questions. "Some day or other, perhaps, you will make acquaintance with Maurice. He is to pay me a visit in the course of the summer."

Lucky that the visit was so appointed. For to Mrs. Varnham transpired, shortly afterwards, the information which the kind-hearted pastor and Balfours had been slow to communicate, that, early in the autumn, Nannie, in pursuance with the long-formed projects of the family, was to migrate to Manchester for the completion, or rather commencement of her education. But though grieved at the prospect of losing her little friend, Mrs. Varnham was too wise not to perceive that something more than the habits and companionships of Middledale was essential to one whose prospects were so promising. She refrained, however, from discussing the subject with the future heiress of Gridlands; because, on the only occasion on which it had been referred to, Nannie's tears burst forth, accompanied by an avowal of dislike to aunt Dorthy, and disgust to the noisome city she inhabited. On the other hand, Nannie carefully abstained from all allusion to the golden-haired Maurice. Her friend having admitted the subject to be painful, it was not for *her* to re-open a half-closed wound.

It was not, however, without some mental reference to the pretty little fellow, who, previous to her departure from the Dale, was likely to disport himself beside the strip of flower-border constituting the garden of Hawyer's Cottage, that Nannie fulfilled a last service to her friend by digging, and hoeing, and planting, and sowing it, to the best of her pigmy powers. The voice of the beck which, at the first melting of the snows,

had echoed as uproariously as that of a giant in his wrath, was becoming daily milder and milder. The waters were subsiding to their summer level. June, with its buttercups and daisies, was at hand; and the patches of furze on the hill-side were already wearing their brilliant golden livery.

Mrs. Balfour, a little graver than usual, was preparing solid school attire for her little daughter; and had even commissioned Mrs. Rawson to make a few choice purchases at Ilington, in order that her child might appear with credit among the wealthy Hildyards. Michael was occasionally known to indulge in a second pipe, when some unguarded observation on the part of the Pairson reminded him that his darling was to be shortly removed from his nightly blessing. The whole family was too much absorbed in its domestic interests, to take other heed of Hawyer's Cottage than that its commissariat should be liberally supplied.

They were consequently a little startled when Nannie, on returning from her lessons, one afternoon, with an unusual bloom upon her cheek and a wondering expression in her eyes, announced that "Maurice was come."

"*What* Maurice?" The name said nothing to *them*.

"Neighbour Varnham's little boy?" inquired her father.

"He is no longer a little boy," said the child of twelve years old, gravely. "Maurice is fifteen."

"Eh! who would have thought it!" was the general exclamation — "and the mother still so young!" And Nannie had hardly patience with the curiosity they began to display in discussing her age: their interest in the newcomer being wholly secondary to their regard for the poor cripple.

Not that she was desirous to be questioned about Maurice. Her expectations had been grievously disappointed. The golden-haired angel had progressed into an uncouth, sullen-faced lad; ill at ease with *her*, with his mother, with himself.

"Maurice has grown so shy," was Mrs. Varnham's whispered apology for his ungraciousness, when he all but refused to give his hand to his new acquaintance.

Nannie went to bed, that night, baffled in the first illusion of her life. She no longer pitied the poor cripple for being allowed to see so little of her son.

CHAPTER V.

YOUTH and summer weather are powerful sweeteners of ill-blood. — After ranging for six weeks the breezy downs of Middledale, imbibing wholesome aliments, sleeping soundly by night, and, in the daytime, following Michael Balfour to the fields or old David botanising over the Moor, Maurice, who had arrived attenuated by the diet and discipline of a strict Catholic College, became more healthful in frame and temper.

So altered was he, in fact, in the latter particular, that little Nannie had more than once ventured to joke with him on the savage manner in which he repelled her first advances.

"You're quite right," was his frank reply. "I *did* hate you. If I could, I would have turned you out of the house."

"*Hate* me! — But why?"

"I could not help it. It was my mother's fault. Almost before I crossed her threshold, she began talking of you. Instead of seeming glad to see me — me, from whom she has been parted for seven years, she began parading about 'Nannie:' — all you were, and all you had done for her."

"She might not like you to see, perhaps, how much she was affected at seeing you again."

"Is there anything to be ashamed of, then, in loving her son?"

"God forbid! But she often talks to me of the duty of submission to the will of Providence; and as it seems you are fated to live asunder, she may think it right to avoid all show of fondness likely to increase the pain of separation. — She considers it wicked to cherish grievances."

Maurice replied by a jest upon Nannie's genius as a preacher. "Why send you to school among the cotton-spinners?" said he. "Better bring you up here at home, by way of idol to my poor mother, and successor to old father Hurdis."

The word "father," applied to David Hurdis, recalled to the mind of Nannie what she always endeavoured to forget, that Maurice was a Papist. The difference of faith between him and his mother, seemed, indeed, almost to account for the mysterious distance established between them. Even in his most expansive moments, even when they were despoiling together the strawberry-beds at Gridlands, or plovers' nests on the Moor, Maurice scrupulously avoided all allusion to his bringing up. From Mrs. Varnham, Nannie knew that her son was reared in the Jesuits' College at St. Gideon's, one of the severest of Catholic seminaries; and that his moroseness, on his first arrival, was mainly attributable

to the austerity of its discipline. But when the little girl alluded, in conversation with himself, to his religious faith, and the relative by whom it was inculcated, his answer was — “Sufficient unto the day be its evils: — I have enough to put up with elsewhere. Here, at least, let me be happy.”

When the day arrived for his return to St. Gideon's, something nearly akin to tears moistened his eyes when he arrived at Gridlands to take leave of the Balfours, their daughter, and their strawberry-beds.

“I never felt so much before,” said he to his young playmate, “at parting from my mother. Perhaps because she has been kinder to me than she used to be. Perhaps, Nannie, because I feel that, now you are going away from Middledale, she will have many a lonely hour, and feel the want of us both.”

She *did* feel it, poor woman, sorely and sadly. — But when, some weeks after parting from Maurice, the little girl, escorted by her father, took her departure from Manchester, instead of being left alone, as she anticipated, Mrs. Balfour herself became almost an inmate of Hawyer's Cottage, where she was sure of an ear into which to pour, unchecked, her yearnings after her child. Though David Hurdis reproved their sorrow as a trivial grief — the result of inordinate affection — the two mothers wept together that the voices they so dearly loved were no longer heard in the Dale.

Not all the handsome gifts brought back by Michael

from her sister Dorty, on his return from Manchester, compensated his poor wife that he brought not back her child. But she had hundreds of questions to ask concerning the opinion entertained by the Hildyards of their future daughter-in-law; and Nannie's opinion of the school to which she was already consigned.

"I'm thinking she likes its large gardens and the half-hundred playmates I saw running about in them, far better than that dull, dark, dusty parlour at aunt Dorty's," was Michael's reply. "Not a breath of air allowed to enter the house. Since Hildyard's death, your sister seems to have been growing sicklier and silenter every day. Nannie and I could scarce abide the stuffiness of the place, after our out-door life at Gridlands."

"And Elisha?"

Michael was silent. But his wife persisted.

"I don't care to say nothen' again' the lad," mumbled he. "But, between ourselves, he's a pity to look at. There's not as much life and breath 'twixt him and Dorty, as go to the making of any other single mortal."

"Poor souls!"

"And then your sister's coddling makes matters worse. So far from living to be a husband to Nannie, depend on't, poor Ely will never find his way out of his teens. Our girl seems quite out of sorts at her cousin's peaky face and piny voice. And no wonder, after seeing that spirity chap of neighbour Varnham's, his younger by a year, gallop my colts over the downs, or walk to Ilsington

and back on an errand; while Ely Hildyard makes much ado to hobble across his mother's parlour."

He said little more on the subject; for the tears of his wife were already falling. Her heart, softened by the loss of her daughter, could not contemplate without emotion what would be her sister's grief if bereaved by death of her son.

Even Michael, however, was not half aware of Nannie's repugnance to the cold formality of the Hildyards' establishment, and the dry, dusty atmosphere of the house. Though apart from the warehouse, the effluvia of woollen so pervaded the place as to disgust a person habituated to the pure air of the hills.

Her recent experience, too, of the prepossessing manners and refined tastes of Mrs. Varnham, placed the narrow views and severe deportment of aunt Dorthy in unfavourable relief: and before her father quitted Manchester, Nannie had influenced his decision that her studies must not be too frequently interrupted by visits to the Hildyards.

"The faster I get on in my lessons, father, the sooner I shall be home again at Gridlands," was an argument which she foresaw would be all-convincing.

At Middledale, meanwhile, she was sorely missed. Something of the phlegmatic blood of her race prevented on the part of her mother any strong demonstration; and Michael, always a man of few words, was growing taciturn from the effect of deafness and age. But to neigh-

bour Varnham, the loss of her engaging pupil was irreparable; and with the good pastor, she often indulged in lamentations over the absence of Nannie, which seemed a greater grievance to her than even that of her son. Nannie, the youngest, and most hopeful native of the Dale, had imparted a sort of counter-charm to the roughness of the place.

Although the time thrown upon the hands of the poor cripple by her departure, was industriously devoted to the fine works they had practised together, the sale of which she found means to effect at Ilsington, through the hands of the Pairson's daughter, the hours of that dreary winter seemed twice as long as those of the preceding one. Far heavier would they have hung upon her hands could she have foreseen that, for more than three years to come, she was to look no more on the pleasant little face so dear to her; or note by gradual perception how the gait and provincial accent she had contracted in Middledale were giving way under the influence of civilised companionship. Twice was Mrs. Varnham visited by her son, ere she again beheld Nannie Balfour.

In the tall, well-mannered, well-spoken girl of sixteen, whom, after so much tedious expectation, she at length held in her arms, she would have scarcely recognised the little peasant girl who had so assiduously nursed her during her illness, but for the reproachful tears that

sprung into the eyes of Nannie on finding herself accosted as "Miss Balfour."

The reason of this long exile was, that the summer vacations originally purposed to be spent at Gridlands, were passed with her mother and the Hildyards at Rampside, or Blackpool, for the benefit of sea-bathing for her invalid cousin; while every Christmas, by previous agreement, the Balfours repaired to Manchester, to enjoy such festivities as were compatible with the infirm condition of the inert Dorthy.

"And Maurice?" inquired Nannie of the dear friend beside whose armchair she at once took possession of the wooden footstool, her favourite seat of former days. "I saw, as I entered the porch, that the pinks and sweet-briars are coming into bloom which we planted together; and I can hear from hence Dinah's croon in the kitchen, which he used to compare to the drone of a bee. — But where is *he*? You wrote me word last Easter, that he would be here in the course of the summer."

"My son's movements, darling, depend on the will of others. Maurice is now nineteen. He is about to quit college."

"And to become what?"

"That, again, depends upon those who have provided his education. They wish him to enter the law. My son, I fear, inclines to an appointment in India."

"So far from his mother?" protested Nannie, who

had learned, in exile from home, the value of a mother's fondness.

"He is far from the master of his destinies," answered Mrs. Varnham. "Maurice has to consult wind and compass ere he steers for port. But let us rather talk of yourself, Nannie. What have you been learning since we parted, besides the French and German I recommended? — And how did you reconcile yourself to Manchester?"

"To own the truth, when first I visited that cheerless old house of my aunt's," was the frank reply, "all I saw or heard struck a chill into my heart. The cross old woman — the sick boy — the wooden servants — the stagnant atmosphere, — all went against me. What I really wanted, no doubt, was to get home again to Gridlands and Hawyer's Cottage. But when I came to see more of them, dear Mrs. Varnham, I compared poor Ely's patience with yours. His brave endurance of pain — his endeavours to lessen the burthen which his helplessness imposed on those around him — his cheerfulness in every interval of suffering — his ready kindness to myself — all reminded me of the friend I had left behind."

The poor cripple interrupted the little enthusiast by a silent embrace.

"By degrees, I grew in charity with even the sour face of aunt Dorthy, and the prim formality of the old servants — so different from the open-heartedness of Martha and Dinah. For I found that their sadness pro-

ceeded from intense sympathy with the sufferings of the child of the house; whom they had seen born, and whom they yearly, monthly, weekly, expected to see laid in the grave. At last, mammy Varnham, I found myself watching him, and hanging upon his looks, as they did. The habit of attending you in your illness had perhaps instructed me in the ways of invalids. At all events, I talked more softly, and read to him better, than the rest of them. And so he began to value my company, and at last to love me so dearly, that I could not but love him in return."

At that moment, Mrs. Varnham, though, unknown to herself, she had seen visions, and dreamed dreams concerning the eventual destinies of Nannie Balfour, far remote indeed from the obscurity of Manchester trade, was sincere in her wish that Providence might prosper this warm and natural affection, by the restoration to health of poor Elisha Hildyard.

Her next question, in a more modified tone than the previous one, regarded the personal appearance of the invalid. "Was he deformed? Was his countenance pleasing?"

"Not deformed, but too feeble for the slightest fatigue. His spine was once supposed to be affected, and a recumbent position prescribed by his physician. As to his face, it is that of an angel. I have seen you, dear mammy Varnham, when lying asleep after your accident, look just like poor Ely. But when listening to reading

— to poetry — to the Bible — his eyes light up, and his looks are those of a saint in some beautiful picture.”

“No further hope for Maurice!” was Mrs. Varnham’s mental comment on all this outpouring of enthusiasm. But she reconciled herself a little to the fall of her house of cards, by recalling to mind that her son, who was now a fine-grown handsome youth of nineteen, had exclaimed, when, in the course of his visit the preceding summer, she remotely hinted her wishes — “I marry the daughter of a Middledale clod? I marry a Protestant? If such be your views for me, mother, why sacrifice my childhood and boyhood, or martyrise your own heart, to promote my worldly welfare?” —

CHAPTER VI.

MEANWHILE, the return of Nannie Balfour to Middledale was hailed as a general joy. Young and old came to admire how miraculously the homely child had been transformed into a "little lady." — But no one grudged her growth or gentle breeding; for, from partial David Hurdis down to the strong-armed Dinah, high and low admitted that her heart was unchanged, and her nature warm, truthful, and charitable as ever.

The old folks of Gridlands felt how hard it would be to them to part from her again, at the close of her month's holidays. But in the interim, not a moment of Nannie's company must be lost. A pony and side-saddle were purchased by the old farmer, that his girl might become the companion of his moorland expeditions: and some especial festivity was projected for her birthday, the twenty-third of July, which, even among the Hildyards, had been kept as a day apart in the calendar. — An expedition to Hawkshill was planned. A fishing-party, to include David Hurdis and the Rawsons, to a mountain tarn, half-way between Middledale and Ilsington, was projected. But both these schemes were abandoned, when Nannie proposed a regale to the inhabitants of the village, now amounting to nearly five score, to be

given in one of her father's meadows. The thrifty housewife of Gridlands was a little inclined to fore-reckon the outlay of such an undertaking. But Michael overruled all. — The resources of his farm would supply the greater part of the feast. Everybody, yes, everybody should be satisfied on the happy day that gave them Nannie for their child.

Happy they whose family rejoicings occur in the summer season, when sunshine and soft breezes are unbidden guests! In that fragrant West Croft Meadow, from which the hay had just been cut, and skirting the lower extremity of which the beck went dancing, as clear as crystal, over its stony bed, though the tables and benches set out were of the roughest deal, and though the beechen platters and pewter flaggons provided would have shocked the refined perceptions of court or city, the blue sky overhead afforded a canopy to the banquet, and the pure air around an atmosphere, which more gorgeous entertainers might vainly endeavour to furnish.

From the neighbouring Dales, there assembled many spectators; and each of the little adjoining farms sent its tribute of flowers or mead. From Middledale to Ilington, Nannie Balfour's birthday was the theme of village gossip for many days beforehand. On the last market-day, Mrs. Rawson had been seen providing largely for the event; and, thanks to her and others, the Rose of

Gridlands was already whispered about, among the young Dalesmen, as the richest heiress of the country.

"As yet, there's no pride in her," was the general comment, when, flushed with delight at the success of her undertaking, Nannie, with her large straw hat flung aside, and her cheeks glowing with excitement, assisted the old people to gather up the fragments of their meal, that each poor household might make merry on the morrow. As she busied herself among them — her flowing white muslin contrasting with their linsey-woolsey gowns and coats of frieze, — her dress (as poor Hood sings)

— seemed wove of lily leaves,
It was so pure and fine!

Independent of the true beneficence of her nature, Nannie had a motive for forwarding the dispersion of the Dalesfolk. She was in haste to convey to Hawyer's Cottage a basket of choice fruit, selected from the rest, as an offering to dear mammy Varnham. She would not hear of even David Hurdis to assist her. "No one must accompany her. She wanted no help. She wanted only to go and embrace her dear old friend."

Nannie was aware how little the poor cripple liked to be intruded on. Though gratitude opened her door to the Balfours, and reverence to the Pastor, she was as reserved as ever in her habits, and as sad in countenance and deportment. Whatever sorrows she had brought with

her to the Dale, remained undiminished. Though incessant industry and skill secured her unprecedented profits, no semblance of prosperity brightened the cottage. Her mourning dress was humble as ever. Not a single object, either for comfort or ornament, was added to her plenishing. It was only while conversing with Nannie that she was known to relax from her despondency.

On the present occasion, the happy girl entered the cottage with a lighter step and brighter countenance than usual. She had so much to tell of the little incidents which had enlivened her birthday feast! She had such beautiful fruit to offer to the invalid, to whom it was the only acceptable luxury. — In a moment, she was kneeling on her favourite stool, at Mrs. Varnham's feet; sharing with her the beautiful nosegay of jessamine from her waistbelt; her mother's unfailing gift on her birthday, gathered from the self-same tree which, on the day of her birth, imparted its fragrance to her cradle.

A fond embrace from the grateful cripple recognised her kindness; and Nannie was proceeding to open her budget of village news, when a slight rustle caused her to turn her head. Yes, — a third person was in the room. In the window-seat, overshadowed by the climbing plants trained over the window, sat a young man, whose face was nearly as much overshadowed by heavy curls, as the retreat he had chosen by verdure. — Half-puzzled, — half-pleased, — Nannie was beginning to pronounce the name of Maurice, when Mrs. Varnham almost re-

proachfully exclaimed — “Surely, surely, you have not forgotten my son?”

“He seems to have forgotten *me*,” was Nannie’s rejoinder, — hastening towards him with an extended hand. For still he made no attempt to rise, or accost her.

“Scarcely, I think,” added Mrs. Varnham, “or he would not have exerted himself to overcome a thousand difficulties, in order to be at Middledale on Nannie’s birthday.”

“*Did* you remember the day? — *Have* you come from afar that you might be with us?” cried Nannie, her eyes beaming with pleasure, and still more eagerly extending her hand towards the ungracious being so slow to profit by her greeting. But though forced to take her proffered hand, he neither moved nor addressed her.

“If it were any one but you, Maurice,” said she, — no longer the shy girl overawed by his fits of ill-humour, — “I should feel hurt at your incivility. But from *you*, such conduct pleases me. Just so you treated me on our first acquaintance; and you have since often told me that your behaviour arose from jealousy of dear mammy Varnham’s affection. You repented, then, Maurice, of your own accord. Take care that I don’t make you repent now, whether you will or no.”

This unexpected challenge was followed by a hearty shake-hands.

“I repent already,” said he. — “I own I felt a little affronted, that I was not invited to your feast.”

"But how could I foresee your coming? I can scarcely believe, now, that you remembered my birthday."

"Here is the proof of it," replied Maurice, emerging from the window-seat, and seating himself between his mother and her pupil. — And drawing a paper from his pocket-book, inscribed "July 23," he exhibited a sprig of jessamine, dry and colourless, — a pledge of friendship exchanged between them four years before.

Was not this more flattering than the most gorgeous birthday gift? And can it be doubted that Nannie Balfour, happy before, was now happier than ever? — To possess such troops of friends as, throughout that day, had saluted her with good wishes! — To possess such parents as, at its dawn, had prospered her with blessings — two such idolators as, at its close, hung on every look and every word she let fall, — was indeed to be favoured of Heaven!

"I am going away, soon, Maurice," said she. "But no matter. — We have a week's happiness before us. — I can ride with you and my father now. We have a fishing-party — to Houston Tarn — in prospect; and on Thursday, we are all going to Hawkshill, invited by old Mr. Zelters, who is staying there for his annual audit." —

Even the churlish Maurice could not withstand this hearty welcome. Though there was something in his nature, both inherent and acquired, that recoiled from the expansive frankness of Nannie's, the charm of her

beauty and of her friendliness proved too much for even *his* mistrust. They were soon talking together as sociably as though they had never parted; nor had the poor cripple enjoyed an hour of such perfect happiness since they were last united in that room.

On Nannie's return home to the supper-table of her parents, it struck her that they were far less exhilarated than herself, by Maurice's return. They seemed to think that her own visits being so rare, an annual advent was too great a concession from neighbour Varnham's son.

"Yes; the lad could be of their fishing-party, certainly," was Michael's cold observation, before they parted for the night. "David Hurdis had, perhaps, a spare rod for him; and the lake-trout were abundant at Houston. But as to Hawkshill, *that* was out of the question. He and his wife and daughter went by special invitation from Mr. Zelters, who was to send his chaise to fetch them. But to take a stranger would be a liberty. To take a stranger was out of the question."

Nannie was disappointed. Conscious of the susceptible temper of Maurice, she foresaw that he would resent the withdrawal of her unguarded proposal. The task of explanation appalled her. She would trust to chance to enlighten him in the course of their expedition to Houston. If nothing occurred there to forward his views, his mother must mediate between them.

When the day arrived, she felt that even Maurice must be in a practicable temper. The weather was so

propitious; — soft, misty, with the blue sky visible through hovering clouds, like a fair face through a veil. — The Houston hills were clothed with purple heather; and the deep solitude of the place was undisturbed, save by the hum of the wild bees, or the shrill cry of the field-cricket. Michael's cart, which at an earlier hour had conveyed as near the spot as the mountain-track would allow, provisions and implements for the sportsmen, was happily arrived. The old mare stood unharnessed, cropping the young shoots of the heather and whortleberries, when the Gridlands party reached the spot: — Michael Balfour and his daughter on their mountain-ponies; the Pastor, his son-in-law, and Maurice, making their way sturdily on foot.

They were soon scattered round the tarn, embedded like a mirror amidst the heather. Old David, who had undertaken, according to the most approved precepts of Izaak Walton, the education of his friend's daughter, was forced now and then to remind her that silence was essential to her success. For Maurice, who stood near her, better pleased to supply her with bait than join in the sport, was continually tempting her into talk, by exclamations concerning the beauty of the day, the rich tincture of the hills, or the glassy stillness of the water.

"There was something holy," he observed, "in such profound solitude."

"The reason, I suppose," rejoined Nannie, "that the

saints of the olden time established their hermitages in the most inaccessible places."

"Ay, in the *olden* time," was his answer. "But what can be more selfish or cowardly than such self-seclusion? This lake reflects the sky in all its purity, because it is inanimate and powerless. But in civilised ages, man should work out his salvation by active virtues, and exalted thoughts and deeds."

"Every one is not called upon to act and struggle," rejoined Nannie. "I know those who are as godly as saints, yet lead a life almost as tranquil as the Houston waters."

David Hurdis, secretly of opinion that his young companions were talking out of their depth, rebuked their prattling. "How did they expect the fish to bite amidst all that chatter!"

"Don't be angry," replied Nannie, gaily. "Don't be afraid that I was going to cite St. David of the Dale as my patron saint — though, perhaps, I might have done so, had you stood on the other side of the tarn beside my father. The person I was thinking of," said she, turning towards Maurice, "was my cousin Ely."

"Well, well, — I'll allow you to call *him* a saint," interrupted the Pairson, whose displeasure was somewhat modified at that moment by the sight of a splendid lake trout which he had drawn out of the water. "Think as highly as you will of Ely Hildyard, Nannie; — and God

grant that you may maintain the feeling, lass, long after you've become man and wife."

If Nannie Balfour experienced any confusion at this abrupt allusion to her trothplight, it was concealed under the exultation with which she immediately began to examine the trout that lay leaping on the grassy margin of the tarn. —

But from that moment, the hilarity of Maurice was at an end. He took no further part in their sports, and did little honour to the good cheer provided for them by that liberal housewife, Mrs. Balfour. Nannie saw that he was thoroughly out of humour. It was no moment for her proposed explanations concerning Hawkshill. Luckily, explanations were not required.

As she was remounting her pony for her ride homeward, across the moors, Maurice took occasion to inform her that he was to spend with the Rawsons the day appointed for their Hawkshill visit. There was an ancient font in Ilsington church, of which he was desirous to make a sketch.

"So much the better," muttered David Hurdle, as soon as Maurice had stridden out of sight. "I don't like to hear you arguing with that young papist, Nannie. I never look at his dark handsome face without fancying that he and his mother resemble Ishmael and Hagar. But crocodiles lay only crocodiles' eggs. Poison from the Jesuits' College, my lass, might reach you at second-hand through his lips."

The voice of Michael, calling loudly on his daughter to be off, as the evening was closing and a cold dew rising, put an end to the controversy. Away she cantered after him, reflecting, as they crossed the solitary moor, far less on the animosities of rival churches, than on the difficulty of dealing with a temper so susceptible as that of Maurice.

But from that moment, the fidelity of Maurice was at an end. He took no further part in their sports, and did little honour to the good sport provided for them by that liberal housewife, Mrs. Balfour. Maurice saw that he was thoroughly out of humour. It was no moment for her proposed explanations concerning Hawkehill. Luckily, explanations were not required.

As she was remounting her pony for her ride home-ward, across the moors, Maurice took occasion to inform her that he was to spend with the Rawsons the day appointed for their Hawkehill visit. There was an ancient font in Hasting church, of which he was desirous to make a sketch.

"So much the better," muttered David Rawls, as soon as Maurice had ridden out of sight. "I don't like to hear you arguing with that young papist, Maurice. I never look at his dark handsome face without thinking that he and his mother resemble Ishmael and Hagar. That ecclesiastical 'only ecclesiastical' eggs. Hosen! from the 'Scientific College,' my lass, might teach you at second-hand through his lips."

CHAPTER VII.

THOUGH two days only elapsed between the expedition to Houston Tarn and the visit to Hawkshill, the weather, after the fashion of our English climate, had changed so suddenly, that it might have been accused of sharing the wayward nature of neighbour Varnham's son. The skies frowned quite as morosely as Maurice, and the gusts that occasionally scattered the clouds, were quite as cutting. Even Nannie, usually so defiant of weather, admitted herself grateful to Mr. Zelters for having provided his Gridlands' friends with a close conveyance.

On arriving at the old mansion, however, she felt that it would have been still kinder had he dispensed with their company. Few people in North Lancashire think of lighting fires at the close of July — the harvest-time of more favoured counties: — and the chambers in which their venerable host received them, rarely aired or opened, felt as chill as a vault. After dinner, Mrs. Balfour, who had not visited Hawkshill since Nannie's absence from home, discouraged her from every sort of exertion, on finding her husband and his host engaged in the discussion of agricultural business, — the price of yearlings and short-horns, and merits of a patent

reaping-machine, — proposed to her daughter a ramble through the old house. As the atmosphere of its closely-shuttered chambers was still more chill and stagnant than that of the dining-room they were leaving, Nannie was not surprised to see her mother, who had been long ailing, shiver and turn pale as she traversed the dreary hall.

Still, with a degree of Dutch perseverance which Michael Balfour occasionally allowed himself to call obstinacy, she persisted in her tour of inspection; explaining to Nannie all she had so often heard before concerning the pictures and carvings; the grandeur of the Van der Helde family, and the degree in which its present representative was descended from old Sir Jacob.

Her daughter, meanwhile, considerably enlightened by study and travel, since last she visited the spot, would not vex her mother by hinting her secret opinion that the hideous old structure resembled some obsolete hospital, with nothing but extent to recommend it.

More than ever, however, was she out of conceit with Hawkshill, on finding, as they returned homewards, that the hoarseness of which her mother had previously complained, was seriously increased by the exhalations of its stagnant canals, and damp of its uninhabited chambers.

Next day, Mrs. Balfour was suffering severely from sore throat. On the one following, even Dr. Moss admitted that she was in danger, and spent the night at

Gridlands. — On the third, she was a corpse. Before the close of the week which commenced with her careful contributions to the enjoyment of the Houston party, she was laid in the grave!

Deeply compassionating the grief of the suddenly-bereaved family, Mr. Zelters proposed, on his own responsibility, to open the vault at Hawkshill, and place her by the side of the faithful Mitje Verhout. But her husband would not hear of it. — “The green grave-yard at Middledale was best for them both. His poor missus should lie within reach of those who loved and respected her; and Pairson Hurdis pronounce the last fiat of ‘Dust to dust.’” —

This terrible blow fell heavy indeed upon her child. — It was the first time Nannie had beheld the dying or the dead; and she was appalled as well as afflicted. Her own health suffered acutely; so much so, indeed, that poor old Martha, herself half out of her wits, could not be persuaded but that her young mistress would follow her old one into the grave. Even Dr. Moss failed to convince the faithful woman that bronchitis was not an infectious disorder.

On the old farmer, the loss of his wife produced the effect usual with persons of advanced age and limited capacity. On the morrow of the funeral, he resumed his daily habits; went the round of his farm, and saw his stock attended to. In the evening, he took his customary pipe under the lime-trees; and when his good

friend David arrived, prepared to exhort him to resignation, welcomed him without an allusion to their common loss. But in the course of a week, though not a murmur had escaped his lips, so that those about him fancied him almost unconscious of the change, it was perceived that his frame had wasted and his head whitened. He had scarcely slept — his appetite was failing. — Half his existence was wanting.

He could scarcely have explained his feelings: but they were such as, at his age, must speedily sink him into the grave. Michael had, however, lived his appointed time, and already overpassed the allotted age of man. It was for Nannie's affliction that Ilsington and Middle-dale were chiefly concerned. Long ere the farmer had announced his plans, or the afflicted girl acquiesced in them, it was settled among their neighbours that, half-educated or whole, she must not be again parted from her father.

So thoroughly absorbed, however, was Nannie in her grief, that she gave little heed to questions of time or place. A great void was around her; the craving after a sympathy never sufficiently valued till it was missed. Above all, there were unavowed feelings of remorse — remorse of the heart, not of the mind — that she had lavished on a stranger sentiments of honour and affection due only to her mother.

When it was signified to her by David Hurdis that it had become her duty, even young as she was, to pre-

side over her father's household, that, during his lifetime, she must abide by his side, if not pleased, she was content. The grave of the newly dead bound her more closely than ever to Middledale.

From all thought of Mrs. Varnham or her son, she turned at that moment with dislike; as persons for whose sake she had neglected her excellent mother. Old Martha, indeed, enumerated "Neighbour Varnham's lad" as one of those whose respectful sorrow was remarkable at the funeral of her mistress. But the few lines of condolence addressed to her by his mother, still lay disregarded. The letters of Ely Hildyard had been perused and re-perused; for they breathed the very soul of pious sympathy in her loss. There are moments, too, when the force of kindred blood is deeply felt. The condolences of Hawyer's Cottage were, after all, the words of the stranger.

Yet, none could have entered more deeply into the state of her feelings at that trying time than the poor cripple; guilty as she was of lapses of filial duty greater, far greater, than the one for which Nannie felt self-rebuked.

One evening, a week after the worthy matron of Gridlands had been consigned to the grave, old Martha took upon herself to force rather than persuade her young mistress out of that dispiriting house into the open air. A soft harvest moon was rising brightly over the garden, as if to create a double day. Michael had been beguiled,

for the first time, by David Hurdis into a ramble over the Moor; and Nannie, pale, feeble, and tear-worn, suffered herself to be led to the bench under the lime-trees usually occupied by the two old friends.

But, though she soon dismissed the old woman to her evening duties, Nannie was not fated to be alone. Ere she had half recovered the shock invariably conveyed by the fresh air and first aspect of nature after sickness or sorrow, two persons approached her from the house; two persons, whose intermingled outline caused her heart to beat oppressively; for it was that of Maurice, bearing his mother in his arms. The poor cripple, so long a prisoner within her own threshold, had slowly and painfully accomplished, on crutches, the distance between Hawyer's Cottage and Gridlands.

And now, her son having borne her carefully through the house, placed her gently on the bench beside Nannie, and then, without a word, withdrew. — After thanking old Martha, as warmly as his nature would admit, for having enabled his mother to obtain access to her young mistress, Maurice hurried off to pass the interval of their interview, wandering beside the beck, whose waters reflected by a thousand sparkling and refreshing ripples, the brightness of that auspicious moon.

What passed at that interview between the two so deeply afflicted, is of too solemn — too tender a nature — to be confided to the trivial pages of a novel. Suffice it, that Nannie's heart was softened to more than its

former predilections; and the former interchange of feeling between them was speedily renewed. Old Michael rejoiced at anything that tended to restore his daughter to a more healthful state of body and mind; and, by degrees, Maurice became re-admitted to their company. He had still some weeks to sojourn at Middledale. During that time, he was to make his election between the study of the law and a cadetship in the East India Company's service.

Yet not to any human being in Middledale did the reserved youth, either at that moment or any other, communicate a single particular of his pedigree or prospects. He had not much encouragement. The Pairson, so humane and indulgent, though he preached the Christian doctrines in their primal inculcation of charity to all mankind, could not altogether overcome his aversion to a Papist, the pupil of Jesuits; and David was the only person in the hamlet possessing strength of mind to have wrestled with the Ishmael whom he loathed.

Maurice, meanwhile, continued to idle away his days under the autumnal sunshine; conversing with the fair young mourner of Gridlands under the lime-trees, or reading aloud to her and his mother as they sat at work. Or from his morning rambles over the Moorlands, he brought back wild flowers new to even her searching eye; or mosses and lichens from the crags on the mountain side. Her gentle thanks, and the smiles that by degrees brightened her depressed countenance, afforded

sufficient happiness to his day. For elsewhere, Maurice was a bankrupt in human affection; and he was beginning to look forward with terror to the day of his departure, and forth-coming encounter with the sterner business of life. Throughout the early morning, sometimes throughout the dreary night, he pursued his studies as unremittingly as though the vigilant eye of the principal of his college were upon him; simply to escape from the painful struggle of his feelings.

"Mother," said he, one evening, when, after assisting her snail-like progress home from Gridlands, he had re-deposited the poor cripple on her couch — "I am again about to leave you, to lose sight of you perhaps for years. You have willed it so; and it is probably for the best. In that interval, I may perhaps make some progress on my road to fortune. My grandfather's charity has hitherto supported me. Soon, I may be able to assist myself: nay, able to redeem you from this miserable, helpless existence."

"I am contented with it," replied his mother, trembling at his breach of the reserve long established between them. "My own labour, dear Maurice, suffices for my maintenance. I have ceased to touch the stipend allotted me by your grandfather."

"But you must not *always* work. Sickness may come — old age *must*; and then surely you will be better pleased to owe to *my* hands the bread grudgingly bestowed by another?"

The cripple wept on, in silence. Her feelings on *that* subject were too acute for words.

"But you must do something for me, mother, in return. Take care of Nannie Balfour. No difficult task; for you love her nearly as much as I do. And come what may, — rich or poor, — humble or great, — remember, sooner or later, she shall be my wife."

Mrs. Varnham started. She was not accustomed to hear her son speak so authoritatively. His high spirit had been severely disciplined into tameness.

"I shall never cease to watch over and love her," replied his mother, in an unassured voice. "But not from the motive you suggest. Did no other obstacle present itself, difference of religion would suffice."

"Nannie's mind is docile. Time and instruction will modify her views. Loving me with all her heart, she will learn to think as I do."

To this assertion, it was difficult for his mother to oppose an argument. Had she not herself abjured the creed of her ancestors, under the influence of personal affection?

"*You* could not blame her if she *did*, mother," said Maurice, perceiving his advantage. "You who, for my worldly benefit, have allowed me to be brought up in a faith which you do not profess, nay, from which you seceded, could find no fault with the wife of my choice for renouncing her own cold barren church to share the worship of her husband."

"This is an interdicted topic, dear Maurice," faltered the poor cripple. "It is one of the direst among our grievous family misfortunes, that I and my son can never converse freely on the most sacred subject that exercises human understandings, or comforts the human heart. The day will come, perhaps, when perfect confidence may be established between us. Till then, talk not to me, my darling son, of love or marriage. Years must elapse ere you are entitled to the exercise of your will. By that time, in all human probability, Nannie will be the wife of another —"

"No, mother, no! Never, never, never!" cried Maurice with a degree of passion which his mother had deemed foreign to his mortified nature. "She will be mine for time and for eternity, as surely as, betide what may, you will never cease to regard us with motherly affection."

"But surely, surely, you have not spoken thus to Nannie?" exclaimed Mrs. Varnham, feeling as though the confidence reposed in her by old Balfour would be betrayed by such a pre-engagement of the hand of his daughter.

"It would have been sacrilege. Nannie is still a child. I should not have dared. But I am not the less persuaded that our feelings are in perfect unison; and that she inclines to *me*, as I, wholly and solely, to herself."

Startled by this bold assertion, Mrs. Varnham re-

solved to exercise her personal scrutiny as to the state of the case. At their next meeting, she would watch this dear child. She would watch both her children. No one could be more keenly alive than that unfortunate woman to the perils and dangers of a premature entanglement of the affections.

But "man proposes — Heaven disposes." This well-intended investigation was not fated to take place. When, the following morning, the usual contribution from Michael Balfour's garden and dairy reached Hawyer's Cottage, the news was communicated from Martha to Dinah, and by Dinah to her mistress, that the late Mrs. Balfour's sister and nephew had arrived the preceding night at Gridlands. A somewhat tardy echo to the appeal of the widower. Three weeks after date, the Hildyards came to condole with him on the death of his wife.

Their arrival, however, was a real joy to Nannie. Little as she had ever liked aunt Dorthy during her mother's lifetime, now that her first of friends was gone for ever, she clung to any one in whose veins her blood was flowing. And little as Mrs. Hildyard resembled in nature or feature the more robust sister who had been fated to precede her to the grave, there existed in both innumerable family traits, intonations of voice, and turns of expression, such as in the absence of one relative, recal the other constantly to mind.

But in her gentler cousin, the charm was of a more personal nature. She loved him as the nearest approach

she had seen in mortal being to angelic perfection. His voice was so touching, — the expression of his languid eyes so beneficent! His whole life was such a struggle to surmount gratuitous torment. The patience of Mrs. Varnham was exercised against sufferings chiefly of her own creation. Elisha Hildyard's resignation was under evils to which he was pre-ordained by the supreme will of his Creator.

The task of welcoming him to Gridlands was indeed a pleasant one. Though too weakly for much exertion, his infirmities had been greatly relieved by three years of careful medical tending, assisted by annual sojourns by the sea; and, unlike the unfortunate cripple of Hawyer's Cottage, Elisha was able to enjoy constant airings with her in the open carriage which had brought them to Gridlands.

"We shall be as happy here, dear Nannie," said he, "as we used to be together at Blackpool. You must show me all your favourite haunts. I am already prepared to love them. Would that it had not been so terrible a calamity which determined my mother to so long a journey. But it is not too late. We may still enjoy together many, many happy hours at Gridlands."

CHAPTER VIII.

"ONE reads and hears tell of strange changes in the world out yon," was old David's soliloquy, that evening, when, instead of proceeding to enjoy his usual pipe with his friend Michael, he went mooning on in the twilight, by the beck-side, listening to the pleasant wrangle of its waters among the stones; "how one king makes laws, that his successor may break them; how the Lord's anointed dine together like brethren one year, and endeavour to cut each other's throats the next; how unghostly men who have wasted their manhood in teaching Greek and Latin to the sons of lords, are rewarded by mitres and crosiers; how profane play-actresses, to whom foreign countries deny Christian burial, are made much of at the British court; above all, how kings and queens in all countries, who, a hundred years ago, used to be overrun with courtiers, as a beggar by vermin, are now forced to become courtiers in their turn, and fawn upon their subjects, — because it is the people who are kings. And then, all this routing out of arts and sciences by princes and peers — affording business to the idle man, though mere idleness to the busy. Strange changes — strange — strange — strange," mused the simple-minded Pairson. "But I never thought to see this quiet

Lancashire Dale turned topsy-turvy! I fancied no pomps and vanities would find their way into my sheepfold among the hills. I hoped that God's commandments, which alone I have preached to my flock, would govern them to the last: as, by the blessing of Heaven, it has preserved them from vice or crime throughout my teaching. But I foresee a change. — I fear a change. — The small end of the wedge of worldly vanity has forced its way; and envy and hatred will rush in at the first lifting of the lever!"

And all this waste of philosophy because, for the first time since a road ran through Middledale, a carriage had traversed the place! That sober equipage of Mrs. Hildyard's, necessitated by the feeble health of her son, passed for as sore a sin as the painted face of Jezebel. If one granddaughter of old Madame Verhout had been content with a taxed-cart, why should the other come braving it among them, the moment her sister was laid in the grave?

But this was not the worst. — Among the commandments it had been the delight of the good Pastor to enforce on his rustic congregation, was the enjoinder to honour their father and their mother, that their days might be long in the land: incitement to the infraction of which, lay, perhaps, more than most others, within daily temptation. But he had succeeded. In that rude district, obedient and reverent children were in the majority. David was accustomed to see the grey heads

of his parishioners carried by their successors weeping to the grave; and to find that in their hard-working households, the old folks retained to the last their place of honour.

It shocked him, therefore, nay, more, it grieved him, to observe the meek cripple at Hawyer's Cottage subside annually into a nonentity on the arrival of her handsome son.

More than once, he had found it difficult to control his indignation at the overbearing tone assumed by Maurice towards his mother. But he was restrained by the consciousness of unwarrantable and unchristian antipathy to the young papist. He felt as if, in diving into the promptings of a member of the church he abhorred, he were plunging his hand into a viper's nest.

What, however, would the good Pastor have felt towards the undutiful son, had he been present when, late in the evening of the second day after the Hildyards' arrival, Maurice rushed like a whirlwind into the Cottage, dashed to the door with a degree of violence that caused every nerve in his mother's frame to vibrate, and announced to the poor cripple that at day-dawn on the morrow he should bid her farewell: — "it might be for years, and it might be for ever!"

He would, perhaps, have admitted, that even in his rage, Maurice was beautiful to look on, as Lucifer, son of the morning. But he would have felt that on the

brow of this youthful Cain there was already a seal of perdition. —

The mother's heart, however, judged not of her son as the mind of the pastor might have done. — *She* knew that Maurice had been reared in a barren and a dry land, where no love was; reared in selfish consideration of his worldly interest here, and his soul's salvation hereafter, without regard to the universal welfare or private feelings of his fellow-creatures. — "Like as a father pitieth his own children," therefore, *she* was merciful — over-merciful, perhaps — to his failings; and with one of those soft answers that turneth away wrath, reminded him how many days of his promised sojourn were yet unexpired, and that the longer the absence he threatened, the dearer and more precious to her the moments she might yet retain him by her side.

But Maurice was not to be entreated. The black spirit was astir within him. He was one of those in whose bosom love is nearly akin to hate. He had seen Nannie in her black garments reclining beside her pale-faced, auburn-haired, sweet-spirited cousin, in his mother's barouche; and felt that he must hurry away from Middledale, or stay and curse openly these opulent intruders.

"I fancied, mother, that, in this rough, hard-working place," said he, in reply to her remonstrances, "we were free from the foul atmosphere engendered by wealth; that the very ring of gold was unknown here, to create

lust after it in covetous hearts, or their contempt towards the needs of the poor. I thought that Michael Balfour, and his dead wife, having never sojourned in cities, had yet to learn the false value of money, and that their hearts were wholesome as the household bread of their kneading. But yonder Manchester people, yonder upstarts of trade, look down upon such hovels as this as fit abodes for the beasts that perish; and these Hildyards will not only scorn and trample upon *us*, but teach that girl, that angel, a false standard of our merits."

"I am not afraid," pleaded his mother, with something as nearly approaching to a smile as her sad face was able to assume, on perceiving that after all, her son's violence rose from an outburst of jealousy. — "Lessons of evil are not learned in a day by a nature so noble as Nannie's; and from all I have heard of her poor cousin, I suspect that the highest value he assigns to riches is a means of benefit to the poor."

"And among the poor he will reckon *us*! — Who can be poorer? — Who more miserable? — This youthful saint, of whom Nannie is so proud, will perhaps vouchsafe you the means of getting better clothed, and better fed; call you 'my good woman,' and exhort you to resign yourself to the will of Providence!"

"My dear boy, you are unreasonable," was all his agitated mother could reply — "as unreasonable as when, on that ill-fated day of the Balfours' visit to Hawkshill, you accused them of slighting your company."

"I did not bear malice against them long," murmured Maurice, a little subdued by the allusion.

"No, for Death intervened, — Death, a searching teacher, even of the obdurate heart."

"Well, well, — you will not have occasion to call me obdurate or unreasonable long," cried he, resuming his angry bearing. — "By to-morrow night, mother, I shall be at Liverpool, to apprise old Macglashan that my resolution is taken. I renounce the study of the law. — Progress in that profession is too slow for our necessitous position, — too slow for such ambition as mine. — Since my grand-father allows me a choice, I will go to India. — India is a wide field for a determined spirit. I may do something there; and as I live and breathe, never will I set foot again in Middledale, mother, till I can appear here as becomes our birth and my aspirings."

He was persisting in his incoherent menaces; for, like other self-seekers, Maurice took little heed of the influence of his words over other people, — his speech being the mere outpouring of an excited temper. But when at length he paused for lack of breath, he perceived with horror that his mother's silence was not the result of her usual meek submission to his waywardness. — The poor cripple had fainted. —

Yet, after his prolonged efforts had succeeded in restoring her to consciousness, the self-willed youth swerved not from his purpose of departure. In that instance, as in all others, he took counsel only from him-

self; nor, indeed, did his mother again venture to oppose her wishes to his. — On the morrow he went his way.

His departure excited little interest in the Dale. All thoughts were occupied by the unexpected guests at Gridlands. Even there, nothing was known of the departure of Maurice till long after he must have reached the end of his journey. But when the Pastor in his evening visit incidentally mentioned that neighbour Varnham was more ailing than usual, her son having taken his departure at daybreak, staff in hand and knapsack on shoulder, to meet at Ilsington the Liverpool mail, the heart of Nannie sank within her. — In the dusk of the preceding evening he had accosted, upbraided, and menaced her, while, on returning home from her drive, she was enjoying a few minutes' solitary recreation on the village path beside the beck. But accustomed to the almost frantic outbreaks of her young idolator, she had not expected to find his threats so speedily fulfilled.

"Come with me to Hawyer's Cottage," she whispered to her cousin. "The evening air is soft and refreshing; and when you are weary, you shall take my arm. I want you to know a person more ailing and as patient as yourself; the person, dear Ely, from whom I learnt the little of good, or books, you have not taught me; all, certainly, that prepared me for your instructions."

The young couple — their close relationship attested by their mourning attire — were soon standing at the

wicket of Hawyer's Cottage; and, a moment afterwards, reposing in that bare and cheerless parlour, so loathed by Maurice as the demonstration of their forlorn poverty. The fairhaired nephew of the Balfours accidentally placed himself in the window-seat usually occupied by Maurice in his untowardly humours; and what a contrast between his placid forehead and saintly countenance, and the knitted brows, and compressed lips, which at times disfigured the noble features of the cripple's son! — Even to her, the difference was painfully apparent. — She felt it, and shuddered. —

The supposition of Maurice was now actually fulfilled. Young Hildyard came again and again to afford succour to his deserted mother. Not in the shape of silver or gold. He was too worthy to appreciate the pride of the self-supported cripple, to commit such an offence. Nannie had long rendered him familiar with the noble nature of her friend; and, conscious how great a void must be created in her existence by the departure of her son, he brought her a few favourite books, which accompanied him wherever he went; books which, but for him, had never found their way into Middledale; books which a gentle mind and accomplished education enabled her to appreciate; books how different from the inflated yet vapid theology which constituted the studies of Maurice! —

At first, the poor cripple thanked him, but declined his kindness. "The promised enjoyment was too great

for one like *her*. Her hours were bespoken. She must not lose her time in reading."

Readily followed the proposal of both cousins, to read to her as she worked.

"As Maurice used to read to *us*, dear mammy, when I was too heart-broken for exertion," said Nannie, "Ely and I are privileged to return his good offices, by reading to yourself."

The sound of their names, thus combined, was piteously unwelcome to poor neighbour Varnham. But she was at once too humble and too gracious to refuse; and when they *did* fulfil their engagement, how grateful to her ear was the sound of those young voices, as they relieved each other in reciting the lyrics of Mrs. Hemans, the metrical romances of Scott, or the Essays of Elia! How different was the cadenced sweetness of their enunciation from the harsh, forcible periods of her son; far better calculated to denounce and comminate, than to comfort or instruct. After Maurice's readings, she used to go to bed wearied or uneasy. But Nannie and her cousin brought a blessing to her pillow, and sat like angels of peace by her hearthside.

CHAPTER IX.

MICHAEL BALFOUR, meanwhile, though deriving as much consolation in maundering with his sympathising sister-in-law over the manifold virtues of his deceased wife, as Dorty in discerning that the mountain air, of which she had so long dreaded the effect on her son, was producing on Elisha nearly the same favourable results as his usual visit to the sea-side, did not neglect the occasion to interrogate her concerning certain conditions of their common fortune, made known to him for the first time by Mr. Zelters, at his ill-starred visit to Hawkshill.

Subsequent events had driven the matter from his mind. But now that the first influence of grief was subsiding, he was desirous to learn whether Dorty had been hitherto as ill-informed as himself, touching the reversion of her grandmother's property. In Michael's class of life, marriage-settlements would have been accounted too costly a superfluity; and connected as he was by long service with the family of Van der Helde, as Hildyard with the house of business of Zelters and Co., each, at his marriage, had accepted, on the showing of the latter, the executor of the late Madame Verhout, that her two granddaughters were severally entitled to

the moiety of an income of a thousand pounds per annum, payable to their order, or that of their children, on their decease. The funds from which it was derived, were to be divided between their offspring, when the youngest-born should attain the age of twenty-one years.

Further, no one had inquired. Michael Balfour and his father had economised savings to some amount; and the fortune of Hildyard the clothier, trebled, at his death, that of the defunct old Dutchwoman. The incomes of Dorty and her sister had consequently been allowed to accumulate, at the interest of five per cent., afforded by the firm in the Barbican: the sisters having mutually agreed that, if the marriage of their children came to pass in their lifetime, Madame Verhout's bequest should be assigned at once to the young couple.

But in the course of that after-dinner conversation between Jakes Zelters and the exbailiff, which enabled Mrs. Balfour to ramble through the mildewed apartments of Hawkshill, an inquiry on the part of the Dutch merchant concerning the age and state of health of young Hildyard, and the probabilities of an eventual marriage between him and the healthful, intelligent girl with whom he had that day made acquaintance, led to an explanation on the part of the executor, that in the event of Elisha's death, unmarried, the Hildyard moiety of the old lady's inheritance would fall to the share of his cousin. There was to be benefit of survivorship between the offspring of the sisters. "And, in that case, or should

the whole become vested in a single representative," added old Zelters, "the trust would cease."

At this announcement, Michael Balfour was as much startled as was compatible with his stolid nature.

"I leave everything relating to my missus's money, Sir, to her own care and guidance," said he. "Gridlands farm, thank God! keeps itself. If bad times should cut us down in our old age, you'll maybe find us knocking at your door, to ask for our own."

"It was rather of your daughter I was thinking, my good friend, than yourselves," rejoined the executor, little accustomed, in City life, to sentiments so liberal. "If (as I heard asserted a year or two back, by one of my clerks who visited at Manchester the house of my late correspondent) — if Dorty Verhout's son be indeed a poor sickly creature, rendering your daughter's chance of becoming an heiress worth thinking of, it is surely desirable that she should receive a better education than a provincial town like Manchester can afford her."

"I see no great call for improvement in the girl," was Michael's indignant reply. "Had my own will been consulted, I'd never have sent her from Gridlands. Why should we want her to be better-spoken or cleverer than her mother before her? I was fool enough to lose sight of her for a matter of four year, only that she might get book-learning and foreign tongues, which her parents don't understand a word of. But even at Manchester, she'd her aunt and cousin to give her a home. As to

turning her off into that great wide wilderness of London, where she'd either break her heart for loneliness, or get it filled with fallals and nonsense, I'd as soon shut her up in her coffin."

"Don't take offence at a suggestion kindly meant," said Jakes Zelters, mildly. "As the executor of my good old friend Madame Verhout, I naturally interest myself in the welfare of her representatives. I should be sorry to fancy, Michael, that you and your wife, who have shown such confidence in my administration of your money affairs, entertained less in my personal good will. When I proposed London for your daughter, it was because I knew what it had done for my own; — now married, and doing honour in the world to me and themselves. As to her being lonesome, my home should have been her home; and as kind a one, perhaps, as Dorty Hildyard's."

For this projected kindness, Michael grunted forth something almost amounting to an acknowledgment. But he did not the less adhere to his opinion that Nannie was best where she was, or to his declaration that all matters relating to the lass were regulated by her mother; little surmising, alas, poor man! how short a space was allotted to Mrs. Balfour to preside over the family council.

"But I don't see what it matters now, Michael, more than when my poor dear sister was alive, whether the survivor of our children becomes rich by inheriting from

the other, or from my grandmother?" observed Dorthy, after this explanation, a little puzzled by the mercenary spirit suddenly manifested by her brother-in-law.

"Nay — 't is only to be a match for Jakes Zelters, that I ask the question," replied Michael, drawing back. It was not for *him* to afflict the good woman who had come so far to console him in his troubles, by signifying his conviction that his nephew, though considerably fortified in health within the last three years, would never attain the age of twenty-one.

"At all events," resumed Dorthy, as if in some degree penetrating his thoughts, "this money, though a fine fortune in itself, amounts not to a third of what will accrue to my boy from the abilities and industry of his father."

It might be that old Dorthy desired to dazzle the eyes of her brother-in-law by boasting of the superior opulence of her son; of whom she sometimes thought the Balfours less regardful than became them.

But, if this were her object, she reckoned without her host. The calibre of Michael Balfour's mind was not capable of comprehending great riches or their results. Competency was *his* notion of wealth. To have enough, and owe no man anything, sufficed. He would have dispensed joyfully with the tens of thousands of his future son-in-law, to secure him a more healthful frame.

A week or two after this discussion, just when Mrs. Hildyard and her sour-faced serving-woman were be-

ginning to reconcile themselves to the rough though plentiful house-keeping of Gridlands, — to be in charity with Michael's pipe and Martha's hobnailed shoes, and on terms of amity with Nannie's pet bantams and turkeys, — a cold breeze at eventide, and a slight sprinkling of snow on the hillsides, when they awoke in the morning, roused the fears of the anxious mother as to the effect of that rude climate on the lungs of her son. A letter was instantly dispatched to Manchester, to prepare their household for their immediate return; and not less than a royal mandate would have detained aunt Dorty a day longer in the north.

The cousins parted more affectionately and more regretfully than they had ever done before; for the loss of her mother tended to endear to Nannie all her surviving relations; and never had she so fully appreciated the gracious and amiable nature of Elisha, as when watching his good offices to the poor cripple of Hawyer's Cottage; sketching patterns for her embroidery, or exercising his mechanical genius in the invention of objects of furniture for the comfort of the sick woman. Crutch-handles, wedges for the support of her work-frame — no great stretch of ingenuity perhaps, but such as her son would as soon have attempted as to manufacture a plough. — "Invalids," young Hildyard observed, "understood each other's wants and shortcomings."

When Nannie bade him farewell, it was with a stringent embrace. She was the first to say, "Write —

write constantly: — when you are gone, Ely, I shall be so much alone! Send me books, too; for, unless through *you*, none ever reach Middledale. — Instruct me what I am to read — what I am to study — and the incompleteness of my education will not so much matter.”

Old Dorthy, moderately grieved at parting with her niece, cast a triumphant glance at her brother-in-law, while Nannie was thus fondly addressing her cousin. It was thrown away. Michael had not listened to a word; and if he *had*, it would have been only to deduce an opinion that public displays of affection are incompatible with the shy delicacy of love. In the course of his ten years' courtship of his departed Madge, he had not heard half as many words of endearment escape her prudish lips.

After their departure, however, Nannie was as she had anticipated, grievously lonely. Winter approached with an aspect anything but friendly. Three years of a milder climate and more luxurious instalment, had rendered her doubly susceptible to the dreariness of Middledale. — Neither her father nor old David was able to converse with her on the lighter topics of general interest which had begun to interest her young mind; and Martha and the dairy appealed to her in vain.

The loss of those two companions of her own age, who, since the death of her mother, had successively shared her reading, her walks, her occupations, was keenly felt. — And now, after accompanying the farmer

in his daily ride, which the roughness of the weather deprived of all charm, Nannie had before her a dim, solitary afternoon. But for the books considerably left for her by her cousin, she would have begun to hate the old parlour, with its monotonous Dutch clock, and glazed cupboards overloaded with delft.

And yet, though sometimes for hours together lost in reflection, or rather in that dreamy reverie which in youth supplies its place, her visits to Hawyer's Cottage were far more rare than during the lifetime of her mother. She seemed to understand that it was a dangerous and forbidden pleasure. A word or two let fall by David Hurdis had startled her into a clear perception of the fact. Or perhaps she feared lest the constant recurrence of the fond mother to Maurice, Maurice, Maurice, might lead to fatal explanations. Even aunt Dorthy, so little in the habit of censuring the conduct of others, had spoken to her drily, if not harshly, concerning her overweening affection for the strange woman who had come from no one knew where, to settle among them; who was so poor, so isolated; and above all, whose son was a Papist, a child of perdition.

The prompting of David Hurdis was only too apparent in the expostulation. — But it compelled the poor girl to interrogate her own heart.

The result was, that she trembled, lest, in resuming her unrestrained intercourse with the cripple she so dearly loved, something might transpire to betray the

fond but angry parting, which, on the eve of his departure from the Dale, had taken place between her and Maurice. She could not bear that his mother should become aware of the terms in which he had addressed her. They were such as would have roused even Mrs. Varnham's indignation, or given her the deepest pain. — They were such as would have driven even her apathetic old father to madness.

Still, Nannie was not neglectful; and whenever she could manage to be accompanied to Hawyer's Cottage by her father, or old David, so as to escape a *tête-à-tête*, she rejoiced in the occasion of pressing the withered hand, and comforting the withered heart of the cripple. — But this could not always be. Even in presence of the Pastor, neighbour Varnham contrived to inform her that Maurice, in his rare letters, did not fail to inquire after Nannie; or that so rapidly was he progressing in the study of the oriental languages, that he expected to be ready for his examination in the course of the ensuing summer.

“And then he'll be off to Indy, and make his fortune, — and a good thing too,” was the rejoinder of old David. “The market for money-makers is much too full at home. — Whereas, in Indy, I'm told, the field is still open.”

By this event of the coming summer, the widow's anxious thoughts were naturally engrossed; and while Nannie hailed the return of spring (a joyful epoch even

at Middledale) with all the awakened hopes and aspirations which the spectacle of resuscitated nature fails not to renew in the mind of the young, her afflicted neighbour seemed to imbibe the same cheering impulses from credulous pride in the well-doing of her absent Maurice.

To Nannie, however, events wholly unexpected were fated to brighten a period, which, as the anniversary of her mother's death, loomed gloomily in the distance. — A fortnight before the recurrence of her birthday, her father entered the parlour at Gridlands with an open letter in his hand, — a rare occurrence to Michael Balfour, whose correspondence with the Hildyards was carried on by the younger branches of the family, and with Ilsington, in person.

"I have got to ride to Hawkshill this a'ternoon, lass," said he. But, at the mere mention of the place, all colour deserted the cheeks of his daughter.

"It puts me out," he continued — (and Nannie concluded that this was his simple-hearted mode of alluding to their last visit to the place) — "it puts me sadly out — because John Bean is coming over before dark, from Everell, to fetch the lambs I sold him yesterday, at Ilsington market. However, Mr. Zelters has set his heart upon my going, and there's an end on't."

"But why cannot Mr. Zelters come to Gridlands?" inquired his daughter.

"'Tisn't about any business of ours he wants to see me. — 'Tis for the behoof of the Van der Helde family.

There's been a deal doing at Hawkshill sin' we heard news of the place, and there's a deal more going to be done. — We've so little call, thereaway, Nannie, that for months and months I've heard nought about them or theirn. — But it seems that the family are coming over from Holland."

"To settle at Hawkshill?" cried his daughter, in delighted astonishment.

"At least to spend the autumn. Workmen have been fetched from Preston, Lancaster, and even Lon'on, to furbish up the old place."

So far, the intelligence was satisfactory. A new aspect imparted to that fatal house would be a point gained.

"Mr. Zelters wants me to give him information how matters were managed about supplies, and so forth, in Madame Verhout's time," continued Michael. "But I'm feared *my* memory's as much outworn as his own. Since I lost my poor missus, Nannie, I've felt daily more and more dazed. However, a man can but do his best. So, to-morrow, lass, I'm off for Hawkshill."

CHAPTER X.

THOUGH Nannie Balfour's curiosity was naturally awakened by the advent of the race with which her own was so memorably connected, she made no move till invited by the old merchant, who, since her mother's death, might be said to stand towards her almost in the light of guardian, to visit Hawkshill Hall. — The very thought of it renewed a grief which, in pursuance of the wise laws of nature, had become tolerably subdued. —

"I can give them no information," thought Nannie. *"I can be of no real use or purpose in the place."*

On Michael's return from his second visit, she interrogated him anxiously; less about the new curtains, carpets, and sofas, than about the new-comers. For the family was actually installed; causing the old chimneys to smoke, and the roofs to ring.

"How many of them were there? — Were they young? — Were they old? — Were there any children? — Any young people?"

But Michael, never very communicative, was now impracticable. — He spoke with some asperity of what he called a he-cook in a paper cap, of flaunting waiting-maids, and a gentleman's gentleman with rings on his fingers and fal-lals on his shirt-front, almost like a lady:

"all jabbering gibberish, he could make nothen' out of." But of the Upper House he seemed to know "nothen'."

"There's music always going on in the old parlour," said he, "and everywhere plenty of light and air, and good cheer. They seem to know how to make the money spin; and to break down old customs, good and bad."

Unwedded by the prejudices of her parents to the customs of Hawkshill, Nannie could not but think that many of them were more honoured in the breach than in the observance. But she said nothing to vex the old man. Nor was she sorry to perceive that his aid and counsel were often wanting to old Mr. Zelters. — Hawkshill was beginning to afford a change to his monotonous existence.

On the memorable twenty-third of July, which on the present occasion was to be passed over in silence, out of respect to the memory of the dead, Nannie, in the simple mourning which she had not yet thrown off, was making her way, for once alone, to Hawyer's Cottage, to return thanks to her friend for a simple birthday gift of needlework. In her hand she carried a packet, which she had received that morning from Elisha — from Clifton (where he was sojourning with his mother and his new tutor), containing Moxon's single-volume edition of the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats. She was in better spirits than usual, — spirits engendered by the happy consciousness of being loved of many, and of having completed her sixteenth year.

Unlike her usual deportment, characterised by an uplifted brow and elastic step, Nannie was stumbling along the grass-grown road, shifting from one hand to the other her embarrassing packet of books; so that before she was aware, she came within view of a group of gay equestrians, whose voices and laughter rang through the air, in tones such as had never before startled that uncivilised spot.

Two ladies, with plumed beavers, and wellfitting habits, were escorted by a young man dressed in the newest fashion of the day; and another, of problematical age, whose dress was of a fashion that might have belonged to any age or country.

The first impulse of Nannie was to make her way into the nearest cottage — (albeit it was that of Dorcas Hubbersty, the scold so obnoxious to her father) — for she had no difficulty in recognizing in the strangers the new residents at Hawkshill. Her second impression was, that they would pass her by unnoticed. But the truth was, that, weary of the monotony of their new abode, they were making an excursion through the environs, in search of novelty and excitement; and Nannie was little skilled to appreciate what, to novelty and excitement seekers, must be the charm of a beautiful girl of seventeen, unearthed amidst the hovels of a Lancashire hamlet.

The care with which she concealed her face as they passed, had, however, completely puzzled them; and she

was proceeding on her errand, half blinded by the dust raised on the road by half-a-dozen horses, when she found herself followed and accosted by the least interesting individual of the party. — The man of doubtful age had ridden back as spokesman for the rest.

“Miss Balfour, I presume?” said he, in accents unmistakeably English.

“My name is Balfour.”

“And my mission, I fear, hopeless. Madame van der Helde of Hawkshill, and her friends, have ridden across the hills, having been induced by Mr. Zelters to hope that you would afford them at Gridlands refreshment for themselves and their horses.”

This was an appeal which the hospitable north-country heart of Nannie could hardly withstand. After stammering a few words about “duty,” and “pleasure,” and the “homely fare of Gridlands,” she turned hastily back; and, escorted by the queer-looking gentleman, made the best of her way home; where she found the party already dismounted, and standing in awkward uncertainty in the stable-yard.

The interpreter, whom she had heard named by her father on his return from Hawkshill, as a Sir Ralph Barnardiston, immediately went through a form of introduction between them. But Nannie was too great a proficient in French to need his interposition. Advancing towards the lady whom she rightly conjectured to be

Madame van der Helde, she courteously bade her welcome to Gridlands, and led the way into the house.

Readily and gratefully did they accept her proffered hospitality; and they were soon actively engaged in doing justice to the golden butter, home-baked bread, and home-brewed ale, of their ex-bailiff, with thin raw slices of home-cured ham, served after the Dutch fashion of the Verhouts. Delighted to find that, instead of having recourse to Sir Ralph's interpretation, she was able to address them in French, at least as pure and fluent as their own, the two ladies, already fascinated by her intelligent countenance and pleasing address, admitted that their expedition to Middledale had been planned, in hopes to make her acquaintance.

With the easy volubility of foreign breeding, they reproached her for not having accompanied her father to Hawkshill, or, as they called it, "*Axil*;" and made it apparent that no further excuse for her absence would be accepted.

"You may congratulate yourself in every respect, my dear Clémence, on having made Miss Balfour's acquaintance," added Monsieur van der Helde, addressing his wife. "While assisting just now to put up the horses, I espied in the stables a side-saddle and clever mountain-pony, which have the honour to call her mistress. — You and Eugénie have consequently some hope of obtaining what you have been sighing for ever since your arrival in this country — a guide to its beauties."

"You will find, I fear," said Nannie timidly, "that the beauties of Lancashire lie out of distance of Hawks-hill. The nearest of our lions are Gordale and the caves of Craven. The lakes lie at twice the distance."

"But surely," interrupted Sir Ralph, a little peevish that his office of master of the ceremonies had been dispensed with — "surely you have something better than the naked hills we toiled over to-day to offer to these ladies, as a specimen of the land they have come so far to visit?"

"We must not attempt to impose upon Miss Balfour," said young Van der Helde. "She is well aware that our journey to England has very little to do with the picturesque. Her father has, doubtless, given her more accurate information."

It was not for Nannie to explain that the uncommu-nicative old farmer had left her completely in the dark. Still less that the phlegmatic reserve to which she had been accustomed in her parents, rendered utterly amazing to her the self-assured frankness of her new acquaint-ance.

So cheering, however, was its influence over her feelings, that, before the Van der Heldes had remounted their horses for departure, she had consented, and with-out much reluctance, to accompany her father on his next visit to Hawkshill.

CHAPTER XI.

COULD the ghost of the thrifty Mrs. Balfour — or, still more, that of the venerable Mitje Verhout — have beheld the pleasant, airy home to which the Van der Helde were returning after their Gridlands expedition, they would have been puzzled to recognise the Hawkshill of other times.

A new spirit seemed to pervade the place and the family. The marriage of Adrian van der Helde with the high-born and beautiful Clémence de Lanville — (the result of that fusion between the Batavian and Belgic subjects of the first king of the Netherlands, which has since been so thoroughly subverted) — had considerably modified the formalities of even the dull old family mansion at the Hague, and the national quaintness of their Château at Utrecht. — Yet the pretty bride recoiled from the ceremonious monotony of a simple Dutch household; and would fain have obtained the consent of Lucas van der Helde, her father-in-law, to her husband's permanent residence at Brussels, where divers members of the Lanville family occupied distinguished posts about the Court. But of this, the plodding old Dutchman would not hear. Obstinate national, and, like most of his countrymen, a republican at heart, he thought it a sufficient conces-

sion to the fair Clémence, to allow his son and heir to spend several months of every winter in a city so extensively impregnated with the luxuries and vices imbibed under the French domination. But, independent of prudential motives, he dreaded lest his light-hearted, and somewhat light-headed son, should be converted into a courtier by the favour conceded to the Lanville family by the Prince and Princess of Orange.

Any other sacrifice he would have made to his charming daughter-in-law. But Adrian must remain a Dutchman.

Ever since her marriage, the brother and sister of Clémence (who, according to the laws of the Code Napoléon, established in Belgium, shared equally with her the liberal fortune bequeathed by her parents) had been her constant guests. All the old man asked in return for his kindness and hospitality, was that his son should reside, during two-thirds of the year, on his native soil.

"I preach only what I have practised," said Lucas van der Helde, one day, when they were taking leave of him previous to their annual departure for the carnival gaieties of the court of Brussels. "I possess in England a noble property; but I have never yet visited it. Till the pacification of Europe was effected by the battle of Waterloo, my duties as a citizen rendered the journey impossible. Since that time, my son has been flitting hither and thither, spending his winters at Naples or Paris, and his summers *aux eaux* — leaving the repre-

sentation of the family solely in my hands. Though eager to visit my English property, I have consequently submitted my inclinations to the prior claims of my home and fatherland."

"But you will go some day or other, father, and take a peep at Hawkshill?" said Adrian van der Helde, chiefly to distract the old man's attention from their approaching departure.

"I *must*; for Jakes Zelters, who has for so many years officiated as my auditor, is growing old, and wants to be released from his task. I have other evidence, too, than his own assertions, that he is less capable than formerly; for the proceeds of the estate dwindle year after year. Zelters even recommends that I should dispose of the property."

"Without having even so much as seen it?"

"Curiosity, my dear Adrian, is not my besetting sin," said the old man, cheerfully. "My agent informs me, too, that he has received liberal offers for it, from a British peer, who possesses an adjoining estate."

"You must send *us* to England, dear sir, to look about, and make a report to you," said Clémence, as she received the parting embrace of her father-in-law. "Next spring, or next autumn, if you are still disinclined to make the voyage, we shall be at your service."

Of the offer thus lightly made, a good-humoured nod constituted the equally careless acceptance. The wise old Dutchman saw that the thoughts of his son and

daughter were absorbed just then by the galas, costumed balls, sledging-parties, and operas of the Court to which they were hastening; where their fair young sister, Eugénie de Lanville, was to make her first appearance.

But in the course of that gay season, the plan sportively devised by Madame van der Helde acquired sudden consistency and interest for the little circle of the Hotel de Lanville, from their casual intimacy with Sir Ralph Barnardiston; an English vagrant of some mark and likelihood, who was spending the winter at Brussels, and who, as a near relative of the British minister, as well as a well-bred, cleverish man, was universally acceptable. In London or Paris, he would have been thought a bore. But in Brussels, where a second-class diplomacy suffices the second-class kingdom, second-class intellects are accepted as prodigies, and jackdaws pass for peacocks.

No one, however, entertained half so high an opinion of Sir Ralph Barnardiston's abilities as the baronet himself. Born to a moderate independence, he had been educated by over-anxious parents, to become, or fancy himself, a superior man, with that delusive willo' the-wisp, called ambition, perpetually flitting on before him in the distance. Left at an early age his own master, he was as firmly convinced of his power to distinguish and establish himself in life, as uncertain concerning the exact nature of his mission.

Attracted by the glitter of gold lace, and the echoes of peninsular renown which had not yet died away in

the land, his first attempt was a military career. But his heroic fever soon subsided. The cuirass in which he had encased himself, sat uneasily. Of the veterans of the late war, the "bruised arms" were "hung up for monuments;" and the youngsters, among whom he was classed, when out of the riding-school, talked only of Mercandotti and Melton.

To such topics, the self-conceited young baronet, pretending to be a superior man, felt himself *infinitely* superior. It was vexatious to have read up to become a Marlborough or a Turenne, and lost a year in studying German fortifications, schnapps and meerschaums, on the Rhine. But, after all, accomplishments are never thrown away; and being now convinced that his real genius was for a political career, he sent in his papers to the Horse-guards, and recommenced his education by furbishing up his rusty classics; studying Shaftesbury, Clarendon, Bolingbroke, Chatham, and Adam Smith, instead of plunging into a file of Times newspaper, of the *Journal des Débats*, and *Allgemeine Zeitung*.

The aspiring baronet had not yet attained the ripeness of judgment, which enables a man to blow away the chaff of his mind, and discover the wholesome grain. All he cared for was to distinguish himself: to deserve distinction was an aim beyond him. The gilt half-pence of newspaper praise would be sufficient payment.

He found himself somewhat denuded of his peacocks' feathers by the hands of a parliamentary agent. — He

had expected to go forth, see, and conquer (armed with Ithuriel's spear and a couple of thousand pounds) a seat in the unreformed parliament, the regeneration of which was one of his favourite hobbies. But, to his great surprise, he found himself, on three several occasions, an unsuccessful candidate. He had chosen to take a line of his own across country, and manage his election in his own way. But he was consequently never in at the death. His oratory was too abstruse for the hustings; and instead of votes, he obtained groans and rotten apples.

Against the ingratitude of the fellow-countrymen for whom he was prepared to devote himself to the last drop of his ink, he declaimed, of course, in the pathetics appropriated to such contingencies, from the days of Cicero to those of Tancredi in the opera. But he spoke to empty benches; and, unluckily, his election bills proved still heavier than his speeches. Still, he did not despair. Laurels must be growing for him somewhere or other; and, after much self-consultation, he declared that Diplomacy was his "mission."

But, alas! a Sir Ralph Barnardiston, rejoicing in six feet two of sturdy manhood, and a pair of whiskers extensive enough for a fox-covert, was too far advanced on the highway of life to begin at the beginning of a diplomatic career, by perpetrating facetious etchings on the government stationery of the Foreign Office, or performing in private pantomimes as a preliminary to the grander

burlesques of official life. He betook himself, therefore, after having hammered as much Vattel and Grotius into his head as would have ballasted a moderate Alberoni, to a course of itinerant study. The politics of Italy, Spain, Germany, and France, were to be developed to his shrewd intelligence by temporary sojourn at their several courts. He forgot that, in this age of shifting convictions, by the time he reached Naples, France would propably have changed its dynasty, or form of government; and that Spain might, perhaps, be in a state of insurrection before the ink was dry which described her as a victim to passive obedience.

A little experience of these political dissolving views, taught him that he had again mistaken his mission. Diplomacy, he said, was out of date. The time for Talleyrands was past. After all, official life was but self-inflicted penal servitude; and he was thankful that he had not enlisted in that slavish corps.

Utilitarianism happened to be the cant of the crisis; and had Sir Ralph been an estated proprietor in a midland county, he would probably have settled down into a busy magistrate; wreaking upon the quarter sessions the eloquence thrown into his system by his preceding failures, and bothering his brother justices with the dietary of his model prison, or the discipline of the national school; prosing the neighbourhood into a plethora of virtue.

But this was not to be. His seat in Cornwall was

let to an experimental philanthropist, who would have thrown up his lease, had Sir Ralph attempted to poach upon his vagabond-preserves; and the poor baronet, whose talents lay fermenting on his hands, unhappily took it into his head to exercise them by embarking in one of those bubble speculations, the explosion of which distinguished the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

As usual, the over-clever man was over-reached by men whom he had stigmatised as fools. He stalked his way majestically out of the crash, however; half-ruined, but without a stain on his honour.

On the slender income remaining to him, he retired to the continent, to live as best he might; and Brussels, a city devoid of all temptation to expense, but where the habits of society are refined, cheerful, and easy, afforded him a pleasant place of exile.

There, his cool and unchecked self-assertion speedily erected him into a personage. His honours, however, were accomplished neither by his political genius, his military ardour, nor his philanthropic pretensions. "Every man," says a great writer, "contains within himself the ghost of a poet, dead in his youth." Sir Ralph Barnardiston carried within himself all that remained of a defunct sportsman, crushed during his first season at Melton.

It was just the moment when Old England became enormously the fashion in the eyes of Young France, Young Belgium, and Young Russia; not from the purity

of her constitution, the grandeur of her institutions, or the vastness of her dominions; but from the purity of her breed of horses, the excellence of her saddlery, and the fervour of her "sport." They revered Great Britain less as the Land of the Free, than as the Turf of the Race-horse. Though they dared not, or cared not, to emulate her Reform Club or Carlton, Jockey Clubs were instituted in every great capital. Above all, foreign dandies entertained an unaccountable belief that "*les gentlemen-riders*" constituted a class in English life!

Sir Ralph Barnardiston, profiting by the mania of the hour, assumed a cutaway coat, laid "Bell's Life" upon his table, and the proud Princes of Hainault, and Counts of the Empire, whose ancestors fought at Pavia or won renown in the Crusades, felt prodigiously honoured by his notice; cut the tails of their coats and of their hacks, according to his pattern, and dared not risk a new saddle or bridle without his *imprimatur*. His travelling country-people, though amused by his apotheosis, never attempted to undeify him in the eyes of the Calibans who had mistaken him for a God. For he took no undue advantage of their infatuation; neither won nor borrowed their money, nor abused their hospitality.

The "sportsman" *par excellence* had attained his fifty-second year, when the marriage of the sister of his young friend, Léonce de Lanville, with a wealthy young Dutchman, opened a vista into a new country.

At the Hotel de Lanville, where the young couple

spent the winter, (a pleasant residence, whose gardens united the Park and Boulevarts,) Sir Ralph soon established himself as a favourite guest; and he was beginning to ask himself whether an expedition to Utrecht the following summer, to be initiated into the gentle science of hawking, might not afford him more entertainment than his usual excursions to the German baths, when, to his surprise and delight, Clémence one day reminded her husband, in his presence, of their projected English tour.

The very thing for him! To officiate as kornak to a distinguished party of foreigners visiting England for the first time, was exactly the "mission," for his present diminished pretensions and habits of life.

So long as Eugénie de Lanville had remained, after the fashion of her country-women, a *pensionnaire* in the convent of the Sacré Cœur, at Jette, it had hovered among his daydreams that the rich young Belgian might be converted into a charming Lady Barnardiston. But a few days' acquaintance with Eugénie destroyed the illusion. Far from sharing the Walloon impetuosity of her brother and sister, Mademoiselle de Lanville was calm, reflective, and devout. Jockeyism was in *her* eyes, a miserable mania. She could not understand the voluntary subservience of a man to a beast; and so little concealed her distaste for the prosy, priggish old bachelor who played so predominant a part in their family circle,

that Sir Ralph was obliged to place the conquest of Eugénie de Lanville among his abandoned missions.

With her brother Léonce, and Adrian van der Helde, however, he remained a first favourite; and great was their joy to find him warmly encourage the plan of their visit to England.

"It would be a capital opportunity for them to see some English racing. Epsom and Ascot were over; but they should be in time for Goodwood. He would write over, if they wished it, and secure accommodations. Immediately afterwards, they could proceed to the North."

At this amended *plan de campagne*, the eager Clémence clapped her hands for joy; Adrian alone demurred. They must obtain his father's consent. His father might still insist on their passing the summer in Guelderland.

It happened, however, that the letter soliciting old Lucas van der Helde's approval, reached him at a lucky moment. The brain of almost every elderly gentleman is haunted by some species of bogie; and the old Dutchman was tormented by the fear that his only son, so easily influenced by his associates, might lapse at Brussels into a *fainéant* — a *mirliflor* — an idle, supercilious dandy, deprecating his mother country and its customs.

Now he knew enough from history, tradition, and his correspondent, Jakes Zelters, of the character and constitution of Great Britain, to believe that there exists more affinity between the English and Dutch than be-

tween any other two European nations. Nothing pleased him better than that the giddy young couple concerning whom he was so anxious, should go and study at the fountain head, the public institutions and domestic life of the country he revered. A baronet, cousin-german to an ambassador, with half a century's experience in his well-wigged head, could not fail to be a desirable guide. — Parliament was still sitting. Adrian would, doubtless, profit by the opportunity thus afforded, to make himself acquainted with the leading orators of the day. By such companionship, his views would become enlightened, — his levity sobered. — They could not do better than go to England.

His letter of credit was fully equal to his approbation. — Zelters and Co. were empowered to see Hawkshill placed in ornamental repair for the reception of the travellers, who, after a sufficient sojourn in London, would reach the spot by the end of July. His agent was bidden not to spare the purse and spoil the house. — Everything was to be made thoroughly comfortable. The prudent father entertained private hopes that his daughter-in-law, and Mademoiselle de Lanville, might be sufficiently pleased with what he had heard described as the luxurious country-life of England, to persuade his son into passing the winter *there*, rather than at the hybrid court of Brussels.

Ingenuous old Lucas van der Helde! *He* knew nothing of Sir Ralph Barnardiston; — had never heard

of Goodwood, or Newmarket; — seemed to fancy the steep hill-sides of North Lancashire propitious to fox-hunting; and that comfortable arm-chairs and a cozy boudoir, in a lonely old manor-house, would supersede the charm of torch-light sledging, in the Forest of Soignes; of courtly balls, and the inspiriting strains of Italian song! — Ingenuous old Lucas van der Helde!

CHAPTER XII.

LONDON seldom fails to enchant even the most fastidious foreigner who is so fortunate as to make its acquaintance at Midsummer. As mere birds of passage, unsolicitous to attract attention, it was no mortification to the protégés of Sir Ralph that levées and drawing-rooms were over for the season. At the Opera, they saw as much of English beauty as satisfied them that it was over-rated; and in Rotten Row, as much of horses, horsemen, and horsewomen, as rendered them more than ever victims to the hippomania, so much the origin of their migration.

A thoroughly English summer-day, at Goodwood, completed the charm. — The cup-race, the sunny weather, the gay dresses of that brilliant assemblage, filled them with delight. Sir Ralph Barnardiston had taken precautions to render the noble proprietor of the spot aware, through the minister of the Netherlands, of the presence of the Comte and Comtesse de Lanville, whose parents had been the intimate friends of his own during the occupation of Belgium by the allied armies; and was as proud of his own accession of consequence among his old acquaintance, as *chévalier d'honneur* to two young and lovely women, remarkable for the distinction of

their dress and manners, as, in the fable, "*L' âne qui porte les reliques*" of the adoration paid to his sacred charge.

"I met so many old friends at Goodwood, *mon cher*," said he to Léonce de Lanville, on their way back to town — "so many old Eton and Lifeguards' chums, whom I had not met for years, that it has made me feel quite young again. — I could almost wish we were going to stay longer in town."

But it was not of Eton or lifeguards' men that the gay, selfish Léonce wanted to discourse. He was wild to be initiated into the slang of the race-course, the mysteries and jargon of the ring, the science of making a book, — all the miserable arcana of the turf, to which so many men, as well-born and honourable as himself, have too often sacrificed both their fortune and reputation.

He was surprised to find Sir Ralph completely at fault. In England, Sir Ralph was obsolete and out of date. Ten years had elapsed since he set foot on an English course; and the race of horses, jockeys, and patrons, was wholly new to him. A Chiffney, indeed, assumes his father's saddle, much as

An Amurath an Amurath succeeds —
Or Harry, Harry.

But it struck him that both horses and riders were far less clever than they used to be. As to the Jockey Club, he was forced, after a question or two concerning

his quondam friends, to refrain from further investigation. It was not pleasant to hear, in answer to enquiries after Lord This, Sir Charles That, or that excellent fellow, Cecil Flam, — “levanted,” — “a defaulter,” — “gone to the dogs.” — He was not anxious that his foreign friends should learn how “books” are sometimes balanced, or “settling-day” left unsettled.

Meanwhile, among the things left unsettled by the results of Goodwood, were the minds of Adrian, his wife, and brother-in-law. Their brief view of the great world made them deeply regret that they had not visited London at an earlier period; their experience of English society at Brussels having little prepared them for the charm of its highest class. — The Van der Helde, assured by the Dutch minister of the delight it would have afforded him to introduce them to the London world, began to feel that they had been misled. Forgetting that their ostensible errand in England was to survey the Hawkshill estate, they secretly accused Sir Ralph as the cause of their oversight, and began to see that they might as well have consulted a last year's almanack.

They were, however, too young and cheery to be long discontented; more especially as Eugénie was prone to suggest that a thousand disappointments would probably have awaited them; and to enlarge on the beauties of river, wood, and wold, which they traversed on their road into the North. They visited Birmingham and

Liverpool; and their own Liège and Antwerp, which they had previously regarded as busy commercial cities, subsided in their appreciation, as molehills before mountains.

The last day's journey, however, proved the most exciting. The servants had been dispatched before them to Hawkshill, where Mr. Zelters was already waiting to receive the family of his patron; and not a member of the party but was eager for the sight of a place, which circumstances might convert into a home. Sir Ralph had already assured them that, if it lay within reach of a tolerable pack of hounds, he should have no objection to remain their guest till Christmas.

The man of many missions had seen a good deal of Great Britain in his time. But when the carriage eventually drew up before the tall steps and narrow doorway of Hawkshill, he thought he had never — unless, perhaps, the royal palaces of St. James's, or Kensington — beheld so hideous a structure. The square-cut, solemn, obsequious old merchant of the Barbican, who stood bowing in the hall, struck him as an ill-taught butler; and unless the cook, cellar, and partridge-shooting should exceed his expectations, he already mentally rescinded his proposal to make Hawkshill his headquarters.

On the Van der Heldes the aspect of the house produced a directly contrary impression. It had been so little boasted of by his father, that Adrian had pre-

figured to himself a place of far less importance; and as both he and his wife were accustomed, in Holland and on the banks of the Meuse, to look with respect on mansions quite as quaint and twice as gloomy, they were prepared to admire and enjoy.

Within, it would have been difficult to find fault. The newly-furnished rooms were models of English comfort. Even the old saloons, with their carved ceilings and unprepossessing family pictures, were objects of interest; more especially as, in attempting to adjust the brocade hangings which became tatters in the attempt, a fine set of Gobelin tapestry was discovered underneath, very little more faded in hue than when the second Lady van der Helde — a city dame with a partiality for decided colours — had caused the whole to be covered with heavy crimson damask. — To have wholly removed what was originally the gracious gift of William of Nassau, would have been held high treason in the family. And thus, exquisite hawking-groups, after Wouverman, were preserved, like Diomed's villa by the ashes of Vesuvius.

The summer sun streamed brightly into the old house, as if to welcome the strangers. Flowers had been placed in the towering Nankin beakers that graced the carved chimney-pieces. The French maids and valets ran hither and thither, chattering, grumbling, and suggesting; while Madame van der Helde's pet *griffon* capered from room to room, enraptured by its release from carriage durance.

Sir Ralph, at once cogitative and projective, alone surveyed the ungainly old house with profound regret that so much good money should have been thrown away in the endeavour to render habitable what nobody could ever possibly wish to inhabit; a place where the daily papers and daily fish must necessarily arrive stale, the nearest market town being twelve miles distant from the lodge.

Even the excellent fare provided for them failed to cheer up his spirits. He was not sorry, indeed, that his foreign friends should acquire practical confirmation of his often-repeated assurance, that it was only in French vaudevilles, the English indulged in cannibalism; and that raw beefsteaks, and *le plomb pouding*, did not exclusively comprise our bills of fare. Léonce, who had spent two winters in Paris, and was a considerable proficient in the *blague* of that fatherland of "chaff," was amazed to find, as he coolly informed Sir Ralph, that, for once, the fictions of that boastful individual were borne out by fact.

The first evening passed off charmingly. Adrian gave himself up to the discussion of business questions with Jakes Zelters, who, after a week's sojourn with them, was to return to the Barbican; and the three Lanvilles gathered round an excellent piano, just furnished by Broadwood, and thoroughly enjoyed a pleasure of which they had been some time past deprived.

Poor Sir Ralph! — What was to become of Sir

Ralph! — The statistics of Van der Helde's auditor were far from amusing. He had no taste for music, except as a pretext for nodding time *out* of time, in a *loge des lions* or diplomatic opera-box. So that, after imbibing his coffee, and the incomparable Dutch curaçoa which formed its *chasse*, he had nothing to do but doze away the evening in a marrowy *fauteuil*; dreaming of Goodwood cups, Birmingham factories, Liverpool docks, Eugénie de Lanville, the odds on the favourite for the approaching St. Leger, his heavily-mortgaged estate on the coast of Cornwall, and Van der Helde's on the Lancashire Moors.

On the morrow, sunshine still prevailed. It is true Sir Ralph brought in an afflicting report from the stables of the "wretched brutes" provided for their use by Jakes Zelters, selected, he had little hesitation in believing, from his own carts in the Barbican. But his indignation was rewarded by bursts of laughter. Adrian had sufficient experience of the wide undrained heaths of Guelderland, and Léonce of those of the Ardennes, to be aware that a sure-footed pony is better riding for such localities as the moors they had traversed the preceding day, than all the thorough-breds in the world.

"But the neighbours, my dear friend!" exclaimed the priggish baronet — "What will the neighbours think of such a stud? — First impressions are everything. In England, as elsewhere, people are apt to judge by appearances. The owners of a country-seat like this, are

not expected to emerge from its gates mounted on farmers' nags."

"As far as I can learn from our good Zelters, *mon pauvre ami*," was Adrian's arch rejoinder, "we have not within twenty miles anything worthy to be called a neighbour in more than the Scriptural sense. Lord Mardyke, the only landowner hereabouts above the rank of a yeoman, is salmon-fishing on the Tay. Set your mind at ease, therefore. You might ride a cadger's donkey, without losing caste, at Hawkshill."

Léonce, however, a thorough child of the century, proved to have taken precautions for his own comfort, by dispatching to Hawkshill, a fortnight before, his own and his sister's horses, attended by their English grooms. He was consequently able to enjoy at his ease the discomfort of the unhappy baronet at the foretaste of the jogtrot cob destined for his use. Before breakfast was over, it was clearly written in the face of the conventionalised Sir Ralph, that he sincerely wished himself at Spa, Homburg, or Baden; or, at all events, two hundred miles nearer a tolerable club. He was not accustomed to act to empty benches. He could not stand a life where varnished boots were out of place. In *his* day of fashionable education, the Highlands had scarcely come into fashion, to teach fastidious dandies the art of "roughing it," and he was now too old to be taught.

A man less cut-and-dried, however, could not have failed to expand into pleasurable emotions at the sight

of Eugénie de Lanville, in her simple country costume, returning from her survey of the gardens, laden with spoils. Prepared, of course, to find in England what on the continent is called an English garden — namely, a wilderness of ill-kept shrubberies, with a fishpond overhung by willow-trees, and enlivened by fancy ducks, — she was enchanted by the formal pleasaunce, reminding her of the haunts of her youth, which those unmeaning *Jardins Anglais* have superseded. Uninvaded, for the last century, by the hand of improvement, the growing-for-prizes head-gardener, dispatched to Hawkshill by Jakes Zelters from his own villa at Stockwell, had found no time to destroy the quaint originality of the place. All he had done was to trim the box-edgings, and bring forth out of the old greenhouse (which exhibited three parts of brick to one of glass), and station on the grass-plot by which it was fronted, a dozen or so of magnificent orange-trees, which had accompanied the tapestry-hangings from Hampton Court, as a tribute from William the Third to Sir Jacob the First; and some noble oleander, camphor, and pepper trees, dispatched from Amsterdam by Sir Jacob the Second.

The orange-trees were white with bloom; the oleanders tipped with masses of rose-coloured blossom; and on every side, bees and butterflies, in pursuit of their luscious morning banquet, seemed to vivify and brighten the air. Myriads of song-birds, so long undisturbed in their haunts, perfected the charm by fearless warblings;

the charm of summer in all its luxuriance; the charm of summer with its lavish tributes to every sense.

The Stockwell gardener, it is true, already foredoomed the place to destruction, in order to lay down turf, and bestar it with fanciful flower-beds, simple and composite; to form the nearest approach to the pattern of a Kidderminster carpet or Ternaux shawl, by means of patches of party-coloured sand and ribbings of artificial stone. But even *he*, while meditating these whimsical improvements, could not withhold his admiration from the stupendous variegated aloes which were traditionally known to have flowered half-a-dozen times since their naturalisation at Hawkshill. Still less, from the colossal masses of *Yucca gloriosa*, which no officious gardener had divided; each forming a thicket of almost oriental luxuriance. — Albeit he regarded with scorn a garden, that ventured to call itself a garden, yet was destitute of a single Californian annual or New Zealand evergreen, these dignified veterans commanded his respect; as that of a Dalesman might have been excited by the sight of a dowager in her diamonds, or Sir Charles Grandison in a birthday suit.

Sir Ralph, however, was not to be beguiled out of his *nil admirari*. What cared he for Yuccas or aloes? Green tubs, filled with plants of painted tin, would look quite as well, and economise winter fuel. Had he ever visited the Botanical Gardens of Kew, or of any foreign capital, where such monstrosities are brought to per-

fection? And why go blistering his face, and deforming his summer boots over ill-kept gravel, and under the noonday sun, to contemplate objects so unsightly?

As no one cared for the company of the used-up, washed-out baronet when suffering from peevishness and indigestion, Eugénie was careful not to apprise him of another of her discoveries in the grounds; — a beautiful spring, surrounded by one of the Sir Jacobs with a plantation of stone pines, and a mass of artificial rock-work; which had lost all its character of artificiality under an unchecked overgrowth of ferns and creeping plants. Under the shade of the overarching pines, the clear spring rippled up as cool and clear as ever; imparting life and a sense of enjoyment to that lonely spot.

It was easy to entice her sister Clémence, and her novelty-seeking brother, to that pleasant spot; while Sir Ralph retired in dudgeon to the old library, to cultivate a *gourmand's* dyspepsia, and preserve the immaculacy of his boots and jeans.

“Who would have thought,” mused he, as he extended his time-stiffened limbs in a library chair, “that these people, who, at their charming Hôtel in the Parc, exhibited such perfect *savoir vivre*, would, on their travels, lapse into barbarism, and beset one with the beauties of nature! They ought to have warned me that the *charmante terre*, they talked of, was, in point of fact, situated in the wilderness — without neighbour-

hood — without resources of any kind. — What is one to do in such a place? The manor not even preserved, and not so much as a pack of harriers within thirty miles round! A few grouse on the moors, — a few thin coveys, — comprise all the shooting they can dispose of; to say nothing of a Liverpool billiard-table, built on the most approved principles of the eighteenth century! But it is too late for the German baths, even if I could devise a pretext for leaving them. I must make it out between picquet with Léonce, and moonlight with little Eugénie, till Doncaster. — They can't back out of their engagement for Doncaster! Afterwards, *en route*, — if, indeed, I do not expire of ennui in the interim."

"And what a specimen of a library!" he resumed, recalled by the musky scent of the ancient volumes surrounding him, to a sense of his situation; — "folios which it requires giants to wield, and gigantic intellects to wade through!

These Aldus printed — those Du Seuil has bound; and not a readable book in all this labyrinth of letter-press!"

He searched in vain the library table of massive walnut wood, for Quarterly Reviews, Blackwood's Magazines, or some of those epitomes of modern literature by which hundred-weights of mental bark are condensed into a drachm of quinine; or oceans of narcotics into a single drop of morphia. And as to attempting the rusty-leathered, foxy-leaved quartos, nothing short of a D.D.,

or Oxford Don, or British Museumite, could have ventured.

What would he have given at that moment for a light, slight, bright-boarded volume of Entertaining Knowledge; or one of the pleasant but wrong, pirated reprints of Méline Cans!

All he obtained in their place was the society of Léonce de Lanville; who, after a cooling refecton of Moselle and Seltzer water, had left his sisters to their gossip and embroidery, to talk horseflesh and grumble with their guest. Grumble, — because Léonce could not help feeling a little ill-used. — Having been assured by Sir Ralph, at Brussels, that “*l’ouverture de la chasse*” took place on the English moors on the twelfth of August, and everywhere else on the first of September, he had concluded, with a foreigner’s utter want of instinct in all matters of sportsmanship, that fox-hunting was comprehended under the sweeping denomination of *Chasse*; and had transported his hunters to England for the purpose. And now, he found himself at the close of a burning July, with a fortnight’s vacuum before him ere even a grouse could be shot at; and three months’ leisure in prospect ere he could sally forth to what Madame de Staël calls “*supprimer les renards*.”

“In short, *mon cher*,” said he, to the fretful baronet, “here I am, deceived by your vague intelligence, and my own sanguine foreshowings; wrecked on the most barren shore that ever crushed the spirit of mortal man

— let alone sportsman — since the days of your celebrated Robinson Crusoe!”

Sir Ralph had nothing to reply. He was as fully aware as Léonce that he had missed his tide. The autumn lay dun and dreary before him; nay, the very day was more than he knew how to dispose of. He had fulfilled its quotidian duties. His nails were in perfect order: Othello's occupation was gone. Yesterday's Times lay crumpled by his side; that of to-morrow was past praying for till another four-and-twenty tedious hours should have dragged their slow length along. He sat silent and helpless in his chair, like a collapsed balloon, or a boozy alderman after much turtle.

Cigars were, of course, the only resource: — cigars, the bane of the modern Christian, as opium of the Turk. The English guests of a country house destitute of a regular smoking-room, would have repaired for this enjoyment either to the open air or the dismantled green-house. Even Léonce and the desiccated baronet would have refrained, in one of the newly-furnished rooms. But in that dingy library, furnished with “nothing but books,” there was no drawback. Soothed by the fragrant fumes, they were soon as completely lost in the dreamy stupor which they mistook for meditation, as ever the gallant Raleigh, or a Friesland boor.

And these two useless individuals — the obsolete and the coming man — were, alas! types of the century; — fungi exuded by the rafters of the Temple of

Civilisation: — the withered dandy of St. James's Street — the precocious *moutard* of the Café de Paris: — alike selfish, — alike superficial, — alike intent upon "the fickle breath of popular applause," represented by the enervate whisper of fashionable clubs!

Such was the state of Hawkshill on even its first day of novelty. By the time a third had closed in, Clémence van der Helde and her brother made no secret of their conviction that the country, in the dog-days, is only fit for the canine race; and that it requires all the social resources of a bathing-place, to say nothing of the refreshment of sea-bathing or mineral tonics, to get through such very long days and such very sultry nights. Adrian was still endeavouring to interest himself about the crops; and Eugénie found pleasant occupation in the needle-work so dear to convent-taught embroideresses. But Léonce was reduced to seek amusement in the stables: sitting on the corn-bin, with a cigar in his mouth, like patience on a monument, to see his horses groomed and their litter plaited round by his knowing English helpers. Sir Ralph, meanwhile, after incurring the cramp in his arms by the perusal of a quarto parchment-bound edition of the erotic poems of Parnell (a presentation copy from that witty diplomatist "to his esteemed friend, Sir Jacob van der Helde, Bart., M.D."), was seriously considering by what means he could get himself sent for express to visit some dying relative. For, in those days, electric telegraphs were not, to waft

a lie, either private or official, from Indus to the Pole; and he was as much intent on escape from his durance as Latude, Beniousky, or Baron Trenck.

The proposal of Clémence van der Helde that, the day being slightly overclouded so as to favour an afternoon ride, they should proceed by a pleasant road to visit a hamlet among the hills described to her husband by Zelters, where might be seen a charming breed of otter-dogs, and a very pretty and well-dowered damsel, the daughter of an ex-bailiff of Hawkshill, appeared to him like manna in the wilderness. They were all soon on horseback, and eager for the fray: with the exception of Léonce, who had too much regard for the legs of his favourite mare to risk the stony byways of Northern Lancashire. He preferred exercising her, in single blessedness, along the strip of turf bordering the high road to Ilsington: making, as is so frequently the case, his horse a greater consideration than himself.

On the return of the party, full of spirits, as well as of praises of the homely fare and homely beauty of Gridlands, he was not sorry to learn that his fastidiousness was better used than it deserved; and that, on the morrow, Mahomet was coming to visit the mountain.

"But what will you do with this girl, my dear madam, when you have got her here?" inquired Sir Ralph of Clémence van der Helde. "I understand from your friend here, Mr. Zelters, that her mother, or grand-

mother, or great-grandmother, officiated as housekeeper in this very house."

"Yes, — for four generations their family supplied faithful servants to ours," interrupted Adrian.

"Then, of course, you cannot admit her to your table?"

"Why not? In the country, etiquette may surely be laid aside. — She is thoroughly well-educated and well-bred. I consider her the greatest acquisition to us."

"But her father!" persisted the astonished Sir Ralph, apprehensive lest his foreign friends should commit themselves in the eyes of the county by such singular innovations — "Her father has the air of a pig-driver. Her father is a boor!"

"Make yourself easy, Sir, concerning my respectable friend, old Michael Balfour," interposed Jakes Zelters, with one of his driest smiles. "For some days past he has been living in terror of even a chance-collision with the grand folks, whose strange tongues he can't pretend to understand. His Nannie, he says, is school-taught, and able to converse with them. But Michael will skulk back to Middledale, or push on to Ilsington, almost before you have had time to welcome his daughter."

"School-taught!" said Léonce, with a supercilious shrug. "A vulgar provincial then, after all! How vexatious! I was in hopes of seeing an unsophisticated mountain-daisy."

"Unsophisticated you will find Nannie Balfour,"

rejoined the grave old merchant. "An excellent girl, who will make a capital wife for some thriving manufacturer; and not the less acceptable, probably, that, first and last, she will carry him in her pocket upwards of thirty thousand pounds. Already, I am myself answerable to her for an income of six hundred a year."

"*Quinze mille francs de rente!*" observed Léonce. "Quite enough to afford her a trifle of French and good manners."

"Thirty thousand pounds!" mused Sir Ralph, deferentially. And it was observed that he made no further objection to the introduction of the "*petite paysanne*" into the circle he honoured with his presence.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Nannie made her appearance at Hawkshill, to be inaugurated into this world of strangers, nothing, not a single circumstance or particular, tended to remind her of her last ill-omened visit. All was now cheerfulness and change, music and feasting; her new companions so prepossessing, her new modes of life at once so simple and so refined.

The only member of the party whose acquaintance she had then to make, charmed her less than the rest, probably because he was less natural.

Artificial manners, even the most polished, convey an uneasy feeling to the spectator, such as we feel in presence of persons, some portion of whose attire is in manifest danger of falling off.

Adrian van der Helde, genuine and outspoken, was far more to her taste. Less striking in form or feature than his high-bred brother-in-law, he was more amiable, and more manly. — As to Sir Ralph, his appearance and costume rendered him far more of a foreigner in her eyes than either of the others. His pompous civility oppressed her. It was so much pleasanter to chat with those two agreeable sisters, than to answer his arrogant questions. Though unapprised “from authority” that she

saw in him the mere parasite of the family, she instinctively placed him in her scale of reverence far lower than the rest.

On returning from their after-dinner stroll through the gardens, which Nannie, for the first time, beheld swept and garnished, she afforded to Madame van der Helde and her sister, what accomplished musicians so rarely find and dearly prize, an enthusiastic as well as judicious listener. Endowed with exquisite taste, and a charming voice, she had never been permitted to acquire music as an art. Aunt Dorthy and her mother disapproved of so sad a waste of time. But her delight was only the greater at hearing, for the first time, those *chef-d'œuvres* of the great masters, which are usually rendered distasteful to the ear by compulsory lessons. No *fanatica per la musica*, languishing in her opera-box, ever experienced such ecstasy at the scores of Mozart and Rossini interpreted by Pasta or Malibran, as Nannie, while listening to the admirable performance of Eugénie and Clémence.

Next morning, it was her own turn to triumph. Though the sisters prided themselves on their proficiency with the needle, as Belgian ladies are apt to do, they owned themselves fairly outdone in the specimen which they drew from the workbox of neighbour Varnham's pupil: a cambric pillow-case bespoken of Mrs. Rawson by Lady Mardyke, the price of which, unknown to the poor cripple, was to be secretly added to her own

earnings. Such wheat-ears — such poppies — such delicate corn-flowers!

“You must let me copy this exquisite garland,” said Eugénie. “I never saw one so delicately designed. But how, in your secluded home, have you managed to obtain such patterns, or to execute them with such consummate skill?”

“Because I was taught by a friend; and because our designs were furnished by my cousin Ely,” replied Nannie; not, however without so deep a blush as to prevent Mademoiselle de Lanville from molesting her with further questions. Zelters had hinted something of his ward being “hand-fast” to a cousin. It was, probably, this sketcher of harvest garlands.

In no other mansion in the county, perhaps, would Nannie Balfour have been so placed at her ease as at Hawkshill. It is not in English nature — in English aristocratic nature — to lay aside thus frankly the prejudices of caste.

Recent revolutions have taught to Continental countries the real value of adventitious rank; and so many obligations have been conferred by the little upon the great in the midst of war and tumults, that a certain degree of re-action has been the result. English people of the first class, whether as regards rank or opulence, are moreover as closely surrounded by a *cordon sanitaire* of superfluous servants, as the ancient throne of Spain by grandees; and to these, they are, or make themselves,

accountable: the stately housekeeper — the pompous maître-d'hôtel — the pert groom of the chambers — the flippant lady's maid. And what would this privy council of the steward's room have said at Mardyke Castle, had the Countess taken it into her head to entertain the daughter of a small farmer at her dinner-table, and even find pleasure in her company!

They allowed her ladyship to invite to her London parties promoted actresses of doubtful antecedents and tarnished reputation, — a deceased wife's sister married to a brother-in-law, or a deceased brother's widow in the same predicament; no matter how short a time having witnessed the double event. But there would have been no pardon for my lady the Countess's stooping to sing and play to the last representative of a line of exemplary servants; having nothing to recommend her to favour but beauty, intelligence, modesty, and good sense.

Even the steady-minded Jakes Zelters, however, became a little anxious when he saw how speedily and thoroughly Nannie was adopted by her new protectors. Before he took his final departure for London, he could not forbear leading the young girl apart, and whispering a word of warning.

"They mean you well; but they are making a play-thing of you, my good girl," said he. "Wait till the young Count, or the young husband, begins to overpraise you, and the wind will change from south to north. Take in a reef of your sails in time, Nannie, my child;

and keep a watchful eye upon the helm, before a storm is blowing. Above all, be true to yourself. You are independent. You have no need of all this patronage or affability. And lay this to your heart, that, whether in smooth water or rough, good Madame Verhout's descendant has claims on old Jakes Zelters, which he will never repudiate. In trouble or sunshine, lass, come to me for advice or aid; and the old Dutchman will not be wanting."

Though far from believing in the necessity for so solemn a charge, Nannie was grateful for the fatherly kiss deposited on her forehead at its close by her venerable guardian. She remembered with what respect his annual visits had been looked forward to by her mother; and how, as a little child, she had sat at their feet, listening to their unintelligible Dutch lingo, and gazing into their very honest, because intelligible, faces, with infantine wonder and admiration.

When he left Hawkshill, she felt considerably more alone than during his visit. Her father, busy with his farm, seldom came near her; and she was beginning to see the necessity of returning home, to look after his household comforts.

But whenever a hint of this description alarmed Clémence and Eugénie with the dread of losing the pleasant companion who had afforded so acceptable a fillip to their tame existence, — Sir Ralph volunteered to ride over to Gridlands, and obtain Michael Balfour's sanction

to the prolongation of her stay; and Nannie, who mistrusted the supercilious baronet, and disliked the idea of his visiting her simple home during her absence, to pry into the nakedness of the land, immediately consented to the concession of a few more days.

By this time, there were, in addition to the rabbit warren, a few grouse and moor-fowl, to afford occupation to the male moiety of the party, and leave leisure for Eugénie de Lanville to enjoy the society of her English friend; sometimes, seated beside the spring in the pine-grove — sometimes, in the cozy Hawkshill boudoir. They had mutual lessons to impart; in languages, in embroidery, and above all, in that interchange of thought and feeling which constitutes the supreme science of human life.

They were left together daily more and more. Clémence had ceased to join them in their rides, and often returned home alone from their daily walks. Instead of favouring old Van der Helde's plan, that they should spend a merry hunting Christmas in England, *she* was able to propose to him a plan a thousand times more welcome; that she should spend the winter with him at the Hague, and there give birth, in his native country, to the heir alone wanting to complete the domestic happiness of the family.

"And thus," said Eugénie, when she communicated the fact to her new friend, as they pursued their way across the moors, under the glowing, but not oppressive,

beams of an August sunset; "thus, I shall be left nearly alone. Léonce will not hear of a winter at the Hague; and it is the duty, as well as pleasure, of my sister, that her child should be born under the roof of its forefathers."

"But surely he would not wish to separate you from your sister at such a moment?"

"It is as much my duty to remain with Léonce, as it is hers to abide by her husband. Were he left to establish a bachelor home in the Hotel de Lanville — where we have all lived so happily — where my poor mother died — who can say where it might end? — Brussels, in aping the manners of Paris, apes also its vices. — Nannie! how I wish you would marry my brother, and terminate all our anxieties on his account!"

"Were you not telling me yesterday, *ma chère demoiselle*," replied Nannie, taking the slender hand of Mademoiselle de Lanville between her own, "that your ancestors fought in the first crusade; and that the late Comtesse de Lanville had filled the place of Mistress of the Robes?"

"And what then?"

"Simply that, while *she* was shining at court, *my* parents were fulfilling menial offices in this very house. I am not ashamed to own it; for I form no pretension beyond their humble condition. But as the wife of the Comte de Lanville, I might be made to blush for their origin, and, therefore, for myself."

"But why need our family and friends in Brabant know of their origin, or yours? They would see you doing honour to their name, and creating a happy home for Léonce; who, so easily led, would, if left alone and cheerless, be only too apt to fall under the influence of dissolute associates."

"The influence of an ignorant, half-educated girl like myself, is scarcely likely to reform him," said Nannie, smiling at her earnestness. "And if you, *ma chère demoiselle*, are afraid of feeling lonely in a house which Sir Ralph Barnardiston describes as little inferior to a palace, enlivened by brilliant entertainments, and surrounded by family connections, what would be the condition of my poor old father at Gridlands, deserted by his child, his only child; and tormented by the thought that she had abandoned him for love of a stranger?"

"I was afraid it was a blessing past praying for," rejoined Mademoiselle de Lanville, with a heavy sigh. "But why not assign the *real* reason, Nannie? You, so frank and honourable, ought to say at once — 'I cannot marry Léonce de Lanville because he is a Catholic, and because I am affianced to another.'"

"It is because I *am* truthful that I do not assign such objections," replied the young girl, thus strenuously cross-examined. But the tears in her eyes, and the flush overspreading her face, as the allusion brought to mind *not* the mild and generous cousin Ely, which it really regarded, but the dark-browed, impassioned Maurice who

tyrannised over her heart, evinced so much distress, that Mademoiselle de Lanville terminated the conversation by printing an affectionate kiss on that blushing cheek, with a whisper of "*Toujours, ma petite sœur, quand même!*" — and hastened to turn the conversation in another direction.

Only a year older than her rustic "*petite sœur*," Eugénie had not much to relate. She could talk of little save the forms and habits of the convent where her youth was passed. But of these, so different from her own experiences of life, Nannie was never weary. She liked to hear of those spreading gardens at Jette, — its vast corridors and spacious dormitories. But above all, of the good sisters and *Mère Supérieure*, at once so dignified and affable, whom Eugénie loved as a mother.

Her sister Clémence had, during her mother's lifetime, been educated at the Ursulines of Bruges, a convent secondary only to the Sacré Cœur of Paris, as the nursery of our Howards, Arundels, Blounts, Bedingfields, and Stonors; — the name of the abbess being usually included in the pages of Lodge and Burke. It was there, that Madame van der Helde had contracted her English predilections, and as much knowledge of the English language as enabled her to miscall every object she asked for, and invariably make herself misunderstood.

But Eugénie, the "youngling" of the family, had been retained nearer home, at Jette, amidst woods and cornfields, yet within reach of the best professors of the

arts in which she was so remarkable a proficient. A girl less artless than herself might, however, naturally have asked herself on what account all these details were so interesting to the Lancashire farmer's daughter, who was constantly tempting her into details of her earlier years, and the forms of conventual rule.

"Good news, my little Nannie!" cried Madame van der Helde, one afternoon, when she had sauntered out into the gardens, to meet them on their return from their daily walk. — "It will be impossible for you to leave us at present. — *Ces messieurs*, a little out of sorts at finding that the Hawkshill manors have yielded them exactly a third of the sport they usually enjoy in the Ardennes, are off to-morrow to Doncaster: — an engagement, it appears, made long ago with Sir Ralph. So, as we shall be two forlorn females, Nannie, you cannot refuse to keep us company. We shall otherwise accuse you of having found your attraction at Hawkshill in the society of the handsome Léonce or *ce pauvre dandi suranné*, our *ci-devant jeune homme*."

A vexatious challenge; — for Nannie had already announced to her father that on the morrow she should return home to set his house in order.

"At least," she argued, "permit me to ride over to Gridlands, to-morrow, to make household arrangements, and obtain my father's consent."

"On condition that Eugénie bears you company. I must have a hostage for your return."

On the morrow, accordingly, escorted by one of the Comte de Lanville's English grooms, they traversed together those all but sheepwalks over the hills, which constituted the bridle road between Hawkshill and Middledale: enjoying the fresh breeze of a bright September day, with the happy spirits arising from minds untainted and hearts unembittered by the whips and scorns of polite life.

At present, the Hawkshill manors have yielded them exactly a third of the sport they usually enjoy in the Ardennes; are off to-morrow to Doncaster: — an engagement, it appears, made long ago with Sir Ralph. So, as we shall be two forlorn females, Nannie, you cannot refuse to keep us company. We shall otherwise receive you as having found your attraction at Hawkshill in the society of the handsome blonde or the pretty dark brunette. — "You shall not leave me," said Nannie.

A vexatious challenge; — for Nannie had already announced to her father that on the morrow she should return home to set his house in order. "At least," she signed, "permit me to ride over to Gridlands, to-morrow, to make household arrangements, and obtain my father's consent."

"On condition that I give the bears your company. I shall have a horse for your return."

CHAPTER XIV.

ABSENT! — Michael and his venerable chum the Pairson had driven over to Ilsington for market-day. — “Didn’t man, woman, or child, the country round, know that Friday was market-day at Ilsington!” was old Martha’s comment on the light-headedness of her nursling; little suspecting that the “light head” on which she fondly laid her brown old hand was in some danger of being encircled with a countess’s coronet; in place of the May-day garland or harvest-home wreath which constituted the Middledale notion of a crown.

“At least,” said Eugénie de Lanville, “though disappointed in the object of our ride, don’t let it be labour lost. While our ponies are resting, you must teach me, in your own dairy, the art of making those famous cream cheeses, which your father sends to Hawkshill; — like May Hetley, of immortal memory, in the Heart of Mid-Lothian.”

“Do not be angry if I turn you over to the instructions of *my* May Hetley, our good old Martha, who is twice as good a dairy-woman as myself,” said Nannie. “I have friends here in the village, who would be hurt to know I had spent an hour at Gridlands without inquiring after them.”

"Friends?" exclaimed Eugénie, a little surprised; for, having now traversed the hamlet for the second time, she knew that it did not contain a single tenement above the rank of a hovel. "Where do they live, then? I saw nothing like a house as we rode through the village."

"Because you measure houses by the standard of the Hôtel de Lanville. Our parsonage would be called a kennel by Sir Ralph Barnardiston. The house of my friend — my dear friend, my best friend, — is half the size of the entrance lodge to Hawkshill."

Mademoiselle de Lanville was too grateful to Nannie for having consented to remain their guest a short time longer, to pursue inquiries apparently unwelcome; but placed herself cheerfully under the instructions of Martha. With her habit tucked up, and mounted on a pair of the old woman's pattens to secure her against the damp of the newly-washed brick-floor of the Gridlands' dairy, she called up her best English in order to profit by the lesson; while Nannie proceeded, not without some degree of trepidation, towards Hawyer's Cottage.

Little more than five weeks had elapsed since she last approached the spot, with Elisha's birthday present in her hand; and since then, what a new world had developed itself before her! — It made her giddy to think of it. — She had nothing, however, with which to reproach herself. She had accepted, not sought, the friendship of these kindly foreigners. And after all, it was an inherited friendship; a birthright derived from

the faithful service of her fore-elders. Still, an inner consciousness whispered that the poor cripple, who had been scarcely able to conceal her jealousy of aunt Dorthy and her son, was likely to be far more mistrustful of her friendship for the new-comers; who were regarded, in that humble neighbourhood, as scarcely secondary in importance to royalty itself. It was something that the opportune absence of the venerable Pairson secured her from a rebuke which she feared as much as King David that of Nathan. But to lift the latch of neighbour Varnham made her heart beat.

When it *was* lifted, however, all thought of herself was lost in anxiety for the invalid; so greatly was she altered by the few weeks which had elapsed since their last interview. The embroidery-frame stood in its usual place, as though her industry had been unintermitted. But all else was changed and miserable. The geranium she had left in the window was spindled up and withering for want of water; and, far worse, the cheeks of the poor cripple were more than ever wasted and waxen. Her faint voice came forth as from a tomb.

After having so long before her eyes the youth, beauty, and prosperity of Clémence and Eugénie, to return to the sickliness and despondency of Hawyer's Cottage, was like sinking into a grave.

Instead of recounting to her friend, as she had purposed, all the kindness she had received and the happiness she had enjoyed, Nannie was tongue-tied. But that

the tears gliding silently down her cheeks spoke for her, she might have been supposed insensible to the grievous alteration of her friend.

"You have been ill! You must have been *sadly* ill! Why did you not send for me, dearest Mrs. Varnham?" said she, at length, in a voice rendered incoherent by sobs. "So near you as I was; and yet so out of the way of hearing that I was wanted!"

"Your father has been very kind. Your father has seen me daily. I concluded he would apprise you of my illness," said the cripple, fondly extending her hands to the guest, who, thus encouraged, assumed her accustomed place at her feet. "But my illness, Nannie, has been of a nature no kindness of yours could assuage. Your attendance, my dear child, would perhaps have aggravated my pain. It was some little consolation to know that you were happy and amused elsewhere."

"I should have been neither happy nor amused had I suspected you had any unusual cause for suffering," rejoined Nannie. "On the day of my departure for Hawkshill, when I brought you those books, and explained the cause of my sudden departure —"

"Yes, yes! I was well then — comparatively happy then. When I bade you farewell that morning, Nannie, I little thought how much more terrible a parting awaited me."

"Maurice!" ejaculated the poor girl, almost breathless.

"Yes, Maurice! He has gone through his examination with more than credit. He has obtained his appointment —"

"And is gone without wishing me good-bye! — I deserve it. — At our last meeting he *told* me he would see me no more."

"But you do not suppose him capable of realising such a threat? You do not fancy he would sail for India without —"

"*Enfin, je te retrouve!*" interrupted a silvery voice, through the half-opened door. And, in another moment, Eugénie de Lanville, with her habit gathered up in her hand, and her slouched beaver half-concealing her fair young face, glided gently into the room.

"And so you wished to give me the slip," said she, advancing gently towards her startled friend. "Dear madam," she continued, courteously addressing Mrs. Varnham, "this new sister of mine has been boasting to us, ever since we made her acquaintance, of a dear friend at Middledale, whom she valued far above ourselves, her instructress in a thousand accomplishments, her idol through a thousand virtues. Yet, now that an occasion has presented itself for allowing me to share her good fortune, she has shown herself so little generous, that I am forced to intrude here, in person, in order to thank you for advantages derived at second-hand from your instructions. Having learned from Martha where I was likely to find you," continued Eugénie, ad-

dressing poor Nannie in explanation of her ill-timed visit, "I resolved to follow you, and examine for myself this *magazin* of embroidery patterns and mysterious attachments."

A faint smile was all the encouragement she received from her friend; the tears upon whose cheeks were scarcely dry.

"Nannie is so proud of the genius of her cousin Ely," continued Eugénie, who, with the aid of Martha, had been imperfectly deciphering much that was hitherto incomprehensible in the conduct of her adopted sister, "that we have had the greatest difficulty in obtaining her permission to copy his sketches. I resolved, therefore, dear madam, to apply to yourself. You will not be jealous of the superior talents of your son. You will not begrudge us our share in the benefits of his inventive genius."

"You are under some erroneous impression, mademoiselle," said Mrs. Varnham, in a faint voice, satisfied that she beheld in this voluble stranger, the young lady of Hawkshill. "Nannie is related to me only by that precious bond of Christian charity which renders her more than a daughter to my heart."

At that moment the door, which Eugénie, at her entrance, had left unclosed, was dashed open; and when Mademoiselle de Lanville, who had advanced to throw her arms round the neck of the sorrowing girl whom her indiscretion appeared to have compromised, turned

suddenly round to survey the intruder, she beheld a young man, whose singular beauty of person and distinction of air would have done honour to the circle of the Hôtel de Lanville, or any other aristocratic assemblage.

The stranger, still standing in the doorway, appeared equally struck by the spectacle before him. A ray of the evening sun falling on the spot where Eugénie was in the act of embracing Nannie Balfour, gave to view in full relief the delicate features of the fair foreigner, whose girlish face, outlined by braids of flaxen hair, and a form so slight that even her riding costume failed to impart to it the masculine character so often created by equestrian costume, afforded a singular contrast to the downcast looks of her friend. Impossible to fancy a more graceful or prepossessing creature.

"*Maurice!*" exclaimed Nannie, when at length she recovered sufficient breath for the expression of her astonishment.

"Yes, — *Maurice*," he replied, in his usual hoarse, deep tones, and with something of an accusing accent. "Did you fancy I had already sailed, Nannie? Did you hope you were already rid of me?"

"I was about to tell you, when the arrival of your friend interrupted our conversation," said his mother, kindly taking the explanation into her own hands, "that my son arrived here last night, to take leave of me, and bid farewell to all and everything so long endeared to him. Maurice has wandered all night, and all day,

about Middledale, till weariness overmastered him. When you came in, he had lain down to rest, for the first time since his arrival."

For this generous interposition she was rewarded by a frowning glance from her son.

"And were you really about to leave England, Maurice," exclaimed Nannie, advancing towards him, her natural timidity overpowered by excess of emotion, "without seeing me again, — without even warning me of your departure? My visit here to day was accidental. To-morrow, and you would have been gone!"

"The better for us both," was the harsh rejoinder of one who with the fearful beauty of the castaway of the desert, appeared to unite his scornful nature. "You have become too great a lady, Miss Balfour, to be troubled by the comings and goings of my mother's son."

Against such bitter injustice, it would have been useless to plead. But any unprejudiced eye required to judge between the unpretending aspect of Nannie, in her homely habit of black serge, and the arrogant air of her accuser, would scarcely have placed to *her* account in the balance the crime of overweening pride.

"And you are really going!" was all she could falter. At such a moment the unjust accusation against herself was not worth even a thought.

The reply of the young savage was suspended on his lips, by the unconcealed terror and emotion of Mademoiselle de Lanville; on whom his startling intrusion had

produced a painful effect. His aspect appalled her gentle nature. The very name of Maurice was new to her.

Unversed in the history of the Balfour family, she had believed the cousin Ely of the golden hair, the lover of poetry and art, to whom her friend had more than once alluded with affection, to be the son of the cripple. The excited being before her looked more like an embodiment of Cain!

"At least," persisted Nannie, too wretched to perceive what was passing in the mind of her companions, "at least, dear Maurice, promise me that you will remain here to night? I need not return to Hawkshill. Mademoiselle de Lanville will convey my apologies and explanations. Let us spend *one* happy evening together before you leave England."

"Happy evenings spent together, Nannie, are at end," replied Maurice, with an air of stern determination. "I told you so, when last I quitted Middledale."

"But it was on mistaken grounds. Remember all I urged, dear Maurice, even in those few distracted moments. I am prepared to repeat it now — to *swear* it now," — she persisted, as if in reply to the contemptuous laugh with which he listened to her protestations.

"Spare yourself the trouble, Miss Balfour," replied he, modulating his voice, however, in deference to the gentle foreigner. "My resolution, taken that night, remains unchanged. I am not so mutable as yourself. In less than an hour, I shall have quitted Middledale."

Already shocked by the almost insolent demeanour of the stranger, Eugénie's disgust was not lessened by perceiving that his ungraciousness was drawing tears down the cheeks not alone of Nannie, but of the poor cripple. Even amidst her tears, however, Mrs. Varnham found voice enough to intercede with her son for at least the delay of a single night.

"I assured you, on my arrival, mother," he replied, "that it was impossible; and nothing I have since heard or seen, tends to make me even desire the extension of my visit. But enough of this. We have much to talk over together during the short space of time that remains; Miss Balfour and her friend must excuse me for reminding them that, at such moments, a mother and son should be alone."

A sudden glow of indignation overspread the face of Eugénie de Lanville, less at finding herself thus abruptly dismissed, than from seeing her young companion so grossly insulted.

Taking Nannie hurriedly round the waist, she rather supported than led her from the cottage. Unresistingly, however. The poor girl was fully aware that she had no longer a right to be there.

While deliberating whether the strength of her trembling companion would enable her to reach Gridlands, Mademoiselle de Lanville heard on the causeway the sound of their horses approaching; the groom having been instructed by her to meet them at Hawyer's Cottage.

"You are not well enough to ride back to Hawkshill, *chère petite sœur*," whispered she. "Remain to night at your father's. To-morrow, I will return hither to fetch you."

But Nannie would not be entreated. She knew that it was better for her to go at once. She must not dally with danger. She must meet her trial with the best strength of her mind.

"No, dear, kind friend," she replied, preparing at once to mount her pony. "The ride will, on the contrary, restore me. The air of the hills is to me the breath of life. I ought to rejoice that I have so kind a home awaiting me, and so true a friend to bear me company by the way."

But those were the last words she was able to utter. When she endeavoured to speak again, her voice was broken by sobs. They rode on, in silence; the good sense of Eugénie suggesting that the sorrowing girl was best left to herself. It was, however, a great relief when she saw the fine woods of Hawkshill darkening the horizon. Still greater, when they had passed the gates; and Nannie, half-fainting, was lifted down from her pony and borne into the house.

CHAPTER XV.

"REST and solitude will be her surest restoratives," was the wise decision of Eugénie. And she found no difficulty in satisfying her sister, whom she was unwilling to render anxious by confiding to her the real state of the case, that Nannie was overfatigued by her ride, and wished to remain in her own room. Clémence was too much occupied by preparing for her husband's departure on the morrow, to be solicitous concerning any other person's nervous head-ache.

The Van der Heldes were not accustomed to be parted. Nor was she altogether pleased with the object of Adrian's expedition. Both sisters were beginning to entertain a little distrust of Sir Ralph. They had detected the solemn fop in so many social blunders, and been misled by him in so many instances, that to confide in his guidance, seemed like the blind trusting to the blind. His ignorance and self-conceit might betray Adrian and his brother-in-law into some pitfall.

Too late, however, to raise objections! Away went the three sportsmen by day-dawn; as joyous as good health, good spirits, good cigars, good waterproofs, sandwich-boxes, sherry flasks, and an easy barouche, could make them; except that Sir Ralph was perpetually

breaking in upon their calculations of the odds by audibly asking himself aloud (*à propos de bottes*) whether it was not just possible that his servant had forgotten to pack up his varnish and polishing brushes?

A person less unselfish than Eugénie de Lanville, might have felt a little overtaxed, that day, by the twofold task of administering consolation to her sister and her friend. But it was easier to argue away the nervous fears of Clémence, as she lay murmuring on the divan of her boudoir, than to cope with the silent depression of poor Nannie. Aware that she had dispatched an early messenger to Gridlands, Eugénie was in hopes that his return might bring tidings calculated to raise her spirits.

The necessity of attending on her sister, whose health was affected by her situation, afforded a pretext for leaving her to herself, that her tears might fall unnoticed.

"I wish, I wish," cried Madame van der Helde, when the comforter had settled down to work by her side, "that I had been able to accompany them, or that I had prevented Adrian from going at all!"

"But why? He seemed so eager for the excursion; so intent upon these famous races."

"Far too intent. His passion for the turf alarms me."

"Admit, however, that you and I were quite as much charmed at Goodwood, as either Léonce or my brother-in-law?"

"Because we regard it as a bright and lively *spectacle*; not as a business. *We* were not actors in the play. Taken as a pastime, races are amusing things; a pretext to bring welldressed people together, — enliven a country neighbourhood, — and promote the circulation of money."

"Then why object to your husband's trip to Doncaster?"

"Because I find that such scenes have a twofold character; one of which, is a fatal one. In our own country, racing is, as yet, promoted to improve our breed of horses; as originally, it may have been in England. But here, it has degenerated into a trade; — yes, a trade! — Nobles who would scorn to engage in any other species of commercial speculation, degrade themselves by the lowest associations and basest resources, in order to make money on the turf. Such ruffians as were pointed out to me by Sir Ralph, at Goodwood, conversing familiarly with all that was noblest in the land!"

"Still," pleaded Eugénie, "many highly honourable men, — many distinguished public men, — have been, and are, connected with the English turf."

"Distinguished public men of all countries indulge in a variety of vices. Some drink, some game, some waste their time on disreputable women. But why must Adrian follow such examples? Neither he nor Léonce is old or steady enough to be trusted in a vortex, which

seems to engulf even men far wiser and more self-governed than themselves."

"Dear Clémence, you alarm me! What has inspired you with these sudden anxieties?" said Eugénie, laying down her work when she saw her usually light-hearted sister so deeply in earnest.

"The discovery that our worthy Zelters has been applied to by Adrian for a larger sum of money than he thought himself justified in advancing without previous reference to the Hague. For what purpose could my husband require it, but to risk in the betting ring? All our wants are more than liberally provided for in this house. We have no temptation to further personal expenditure."

"And has Adrian confided nothing to you on the subject?"

"Not a syllable! Yet you well know how little reserve has hitherto subsisted between us."

"At all events, as Mr. Zelters was prudent enough to withhold his assistance, you have no immediate loss of money to apprehend."

"I have something far worse to apprehend: that he may engage his credit, his name, and be every way a loser."

"But is a foreigner, like Adrian, able to bet upon parole?"

"Both he and Léonce are well known at the Paris clubs, in which so many of these English *roués* are in-

cluded. Sir Ralph, too, both *could* and *would* put him in the way of raising money. I overheard a conversation between him and Léonce last evening, while you were away, and they thought me dozing on the sofa, that filled me with indignation."

"I cannot believe," argued Eugénie, warmly, "that either the precepts or example of that contemptible man would betray my brother into a discreditable action."

"Nor I, nor I. Léonce has a sensitive regard for the honour of his name. No one sets a higher value on character. But in turf transactions, proceedings such as would be accounted infamous elsewhere, pass as matters of custom. Dear Eugénie! should my husband or brother get entangled in some of the villanous meshes of this odious pursuit, how deeply should I regret our English journey!"

"Why anticipate evil?" rejoined her sister, fondly embracing her. "For some time past, I have regretted that what at first I thought a mere foible, a fashion, the folly of the day, affected by our young countrymen as part of their Anglomania, seemed to be taking permanent root among us. The company of grooms and trainers has not improved the manners of our *lions*. — Altogether the tone of public morality has been lowered by familiarity with the stable. But now that Adrian is about to become a *père de famille*, he will care less for such things; and we must find a good little wife for Léonce, to wean him from the society of Sir Ralph."

She did not, however, even to distract her sister's mind from its uneasy reflections, impart to Madame van der Helde the incidents of the preceding day; which had effectually obliterated her lingering hope that the good, little wife might perhaps be found at Gridlands.

Poor Nannie, meanwhile, unconscious that any other anxiety, or cause for anxiety, than her own, existed in the house, was exerting all her powers of self-control to enable her to meet her friends with cheerfulness in the course of the day. But till the arrival of a letter which she was expecting from her father, she judged it better to keep her room. It was the first time in her life there had been occasion for correspondence between them; for during her prolonged absence from Middledale, it was her mother she addressed. The very handwriting of her surviving parent was known to her only in the weekly account-books of his farm: — large, formal, legible; — how little calculated to discuss the fond details of a sensitive heart!

A little surprised, a little hurt, that his reply to her pressing appeal had not been more immediate, she was restlessly pacing her chamber overlooking the gardens — pausing every now and then beside the open window, to wonder how they could look so gay and smell so sweet, when her own prospects were so desolate, — when the door was cautiously opened, and in place of Mademoiselle de Lanville, whom she was expecting, the old farmer himself hobbled into the room. The unaccustomed ascent

of the lofty staircase had exhausted his breath; and after a hearty embrace of his daughter, it took him more minutes to recover his powers of speech, carefully wipe his forehead, and deliberately settle down in the easy chair which, to *his* inexperience, seemed remarkably *uneasy*, than Nannie's patience could afford. It was some comfort that there was no look of displeasure in his countenance. But old Michael's face was not of those in whose mobile expression men may read strange things.

"You received my letter, father?" said his daughter, at length, unable longer to control her anxiety.

"Didn't Bill Woodham tell you so, as I bid him? And an't I here now, lass, to answer it? Better speak on such matters, Nan, than write. 'Least said is soonest mended,' was ever the cry of my poor missus. But too much writing is a deal harder to mend. It seems, Nannie, that Master Zelters has been a-talking to you about your fortune, and your independence, and that. If your mother and I never did, it was because we thought it scarce decent for a child to be reckoning in its parents' lifetime on what was to be gathered at their death. It seemed contrary to natur."

"My dear father," — Nannie was beginning.

"Let me speak on, lass," interrupted the farmer, "for I've a mort of one kind or other to say. Well, Jakes Zelters is manager of old Madam Verhout's property, and maybe 'twas his duty to insense you how far you were

entitled to't. And now, you write to me, saying what's true enough, that we're above the world, and that a slice off our loaf would ne'er be missed; as a reason for wanting to make such a gift or loan to our poor neighbour at Hawyer's, as would save all need of parting from her son for the short time that Dr. Moss has told us she's like to live. Now, there's a-many reasons, Nan, my lass, to set again this fancy of yours. In the first place, till you're one and-twenty, the money can't be touched; and perhaps *that's* enough. Next, how can you fancy that neighbour Varnham, as proud by nature as a queen on her throne, would stoop to accept alms of a mere girl? Last of all, your whimsy came too late. Before I got your rambling letter, child, Maurice had sailed for Indy."

Luckily, Michael Balfour terminated his explanation by a second application of a large bandana to his bald head, or the deadly paleness of his daughter, at this announcement, could not have failed to shock him.

"Still, I needn't to say, lass," he continued, after having re-gathered breath for the effort, "how dearly I love to do what's agreeable to you, without being hurtful. So, after thinking over what you'd wrote about this poor helpless lady being left alone in her last moments, and considering how much she has assisted, Nannie, in making you what you are, I made up my mind to offer her a home at Gridlands for the remnant of her days. The house has been lonesome to you since you

lost your poor mother, whose place shall never be filled up. 'There's the blue room for the poor soul,' says I to myself, 'if Nannie and she can make it agreeable to her to remove from Hawyer's Cottage.'"

His daughter remained silent. She scarcely seemed to understand what he was talking about. The influence of the blow she had received was still predominant.

"But your old daddy's no longer in his teens, like some folks, Nannie," resumed Michael, almost archly. "Your old daddy does not write letters hand over head, — staking his word to things one day, such as he might be like to repent the next. So, afore making the proffer, lass, I determined to lay my head again a more knowledgeable one than my own, and consult the Pairson — a sincere friend to neighbour Varnham."

"But not to her son," interrupted Nannie. "David has always entertained ill-feelings towards Maurice."

"Then, depend on't, they're deserved," said Michael, gravely. "David Hurdis is one whose wisdom is from above. I never knew an act or thought of David's prompted by worldly resentments."

"And what was his opinion?"

"He gave me none. He left me to form one for myself. But he afforded me facts to judge from. Last summer, he told me, one of the partners in Thorp and Macglashan's house (by whom Hawyer's Cottage was hired through John Rawson), being on business at Ilington,

fell in with David at his son-in-law's, and made inquiry of him after the health and spirits of Mrs. Varnham; acknowledging thankfully the kindness she had received at Middledale. In return, David praised her, as she deserved, for working her way as few women, so afflicted, would have done, and as being thoroughly resigned, throughout her trials, to the will of the Almighty. And what said he in return, Nannie? That her sufferings might be great: but that it needed them all to expiate the backslidings of her youth. 'She has, I fear, further evil to abide in the morose character of her son,' added he. 'But a bad daughter deserves a rebellious child. They who, in their day of prosperity, fall from God, must not in their days of adversity expect succour at his hands.' 'From that saying,' added David, 'I rightly guessed the man to be a Papist. *Our* church preaches a God of mercy and forgiveness, who sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust.'"

"Backslidings of her youth!" mused Nannie — recalling to mind how often, in days of pain and depression, the cripple had, in her presence, indulged in similar self-accusations.

"And after all this, Nannie," resumed her father, "David and I have come to a judgment that, with such a cloud hanging over her, it would be amiss for me to make her a hearth-and-home resident with my dead missus's daughter. You shall double, treble, quadruple if you will, the help we have hitherto afforded her.

Not out of your means, lass — keep *them* to aid a household of your own — but out of mine. If she chooses to speak out, and can give a good account of herself, David shall be judge between us, and make her, in our name, the tender of a comfortable home. The lad's gone — the more's the blessing! — and is never like to come back. For there's a bad and ungrateful spirit in Maurice, if ever mortal countenance spoke the truth!"

"I do not see," faltered Nannie, "what right we have to question Mrs. Varnham concerning her private affairs. She has made no claim upon us — asked no charity. She has paid you your rent, father, as duly as any other lodger could have done. Better leave her unmolested. Better leave things as they are."

"So thinks David; and I'm as willing as you can be that he should decide. Only I was a little minded, Nannie, that by having somebody to be company for you by the fireside at Gridlands, in place of the poor old man, always maundering out o' doors after his beasts and his crops, you might be more content to stay at home. You've been a long spell at Hawkshill, lass: and by the long face you're wearing to day, I can't but doubt whether you're better or happier here than in the old homestead. My poor missus, I know, became twice the woman, at Gridlands, she ever was in this grand froggery, for all its mirrors and gildings."

"I shall be at home again soon, father," she replied,

scarcely able to restrain her tears. "Hereafter, you shall find there is no need of a third person's company to keep me from gadding. I have all but promised to stay with Madame van der Helde while her husband and brother are away. But they will return at the end of the week, and by that time, you must fetch me back to Gridlands."

With this prospect before him, old Michael jogged home again, happy and rejoicing, to communicate to David Hurdis, that evening, under the lime-trees, in how dutiful a spirit his dear little daughter had submitted to their joint authority.

But Nannie had fixed too early a date for the commencement of domestic happiness at the farm. Events were even then passing at Doncaster, only too likely to procrastinate her departure from Hawkshill.

CHAPTER XVI.

THIRTY years ago, Yorkshire was justly proud of its Doncaster races, as the best county meeting in the kingdom. The company assembled, the beauty of the equipages, the general respectability of the crowd, placed them, quite as much as the merits of the far-famed Leger, at the head of their class. Now that, thanks to the re-action produced by railroads, Doncaster has come as much within range of London as Epsom and Ascot, till the ruinous tyranny of post-horses was overpast, the character of the meeting has changed. It is no longer a county affair. Doncaster now represents only the autumnal rendezvous of sporting-men and blacklegs, — dupers and duped; — a species of locusts prepared to strip, not the green tree, but the green-horns.

The enthusiasm of Adrian and Léonce on saluting this hallowed ground of "*le sport*," was as exalted as that of some poet of the romantic school, uncovering his head on beholding the distant cupola of St. Peter's and hearing his postilion's announcement of "ROMA!" — "Siste Viator, thou treadest on a jockey!" seemed to sound in their ears.

Their satisfaction in taking possession of the quarters bespoken for them by Sir Ralph, was not diminished by

finding a large party of their Parisian chums of the Jockey and Moutard Clubs, established in a neighbouring hotel; to assist in the absorption of champagne, the *chef-d'œuvre* of modern chemistry, and claret to which Bordeaux contributed at the rate of twenty parts per cent. But it was all part of "*le sport*;" and they pricked their racing-cards, and looked and talked as knowingly about the odds and the morrow's event, as if they knew more of a race-horse than that it possessed four legs and a tail.

On the course, the following day, they were able to make a triumphant exhibition in the eyes of Guy de la Tremouille and Bertrand de Noailles, who, at Chantilly or the Croix de Berny, stood on such much higher grounds than themselves. Not only had the good seed sown at Goodwood struck root and prospered, but a precautionary letter or two from Sir Ralph to a few of his old associates, placed their merits in relief as "two excellent fellows, of excellent family; able and willing to give money for a horse, or put money on a horse." — They were, in consequence, received with open arms; obtained cards for the stewards' stand; and "*des shake-hands*" from several of those whose praise is fame in that *élite* populace, where men derive their good name either from the peerage, or a tailor's book of patterns.

"Nora is scratched," "Belfungus is amiss," "Sixteen to four has just been offered on Lady Blanche," are, among such people, announcements far more interesting

to mankind than news of the President's message or a ministerial minority; and poor Léonce de Lanville who, under the instructions of Sir Ralph, had been attempting, *d'emblée*, the manufacture of "a book," with as much audacity as if it did not require nearly the same expenditure of brains as the score of an opera, or cooking of a Budget, was beginning to look as much puzzled as a dunce going up for his little-go.

Sir Ralph, conscious, perhaps, that his infallibility was somewhat waning in the estimation of his foreign friends, with whom, as he intended to spend the winter at Brussels, it was necessary to retain his influence, had in the interval accomplished what he considered a *coup d'état*.

Having ascertained that the Earl of Mardyke was in the habit of seeing the Leger run for, — his brother-in-law, Lord Skewgill, being the proprietor, not only of one of the finest seats in the neighbourhood, but of an excellent racing stud, — he contrived to make his acquaintance through a fashionable friend, for the sole purpose of presenting to him his wealthy Lancashire neighbour, the proprietor of Hawkshill.

Now it happened that the Van der Heldes were objects of as much importance to the Earl, as Nora and Belfungus to Léonce and Adrian. His lordship's chief object in life was the preserving of his manors. His father, as he was never weary of complaining, had behaved shamefully to him. Paralytic for the last ten

years of a sedentary existence, he had not judged it due to the predilections of his son to devote to the maintenance of an army of game-keepers, the money he was in the habit of expending on hospitals, reformatories, and church-building. Everybody, especially a paralytic peer, has his little weaknesses; and those of the late Lord Mardyke "leaned to virtue's side." When he was laid in his crimson velvet coffin, the cause of humanity was the loser.

But this was no excuse in the eyes of his heir; whose object in the nineteenth century was that of William Rufus in the twelfth; to secure to his gun (or cross-bow) facilities for bringing down the greatest amount of *feræ naturæ*, no matter at what cost to the two-legged beasts of the creation.

Now the grand obstacle to game-preserving at Mardyke Castle, was the state of affairs at Hawkshill. The absenteeism of the Dutch proprietor was a serious injury. The earl had done everything in his power to conciliate the agent. He had even driven in his phaeton, with his best pair of steppers, to the Barbican; and endeavoured to persuade old Zelters *viva voce* that it was his duty towards his employer at the Hague, as well as his duty towards his neighbour at Mardyke Castle, to become his ally in the war of extermination between pheasants and peasants. But Zelters, already ashamed of the diminished proceeds of the estate, would not hear of the expenditure of a farthing. Nothing was to be done with the old

Dutchman. On his imperturbable mind, the phaeton, its steppers, and the coronets on their blinkers, had no more effect than the reflections from a magic lantern on a whited wall. Had the Earl been a wholesale grocer in Aldermanbury, come to treat with him for a bale of cinnamon, or a chest of cloves, he would have given him twice as much attention.

It was, consequently, through a fashionable, legal firm (having as many heads as Cerberus, each having a suite of chambers in Lincoln's Inn, that vied in gorgeousness with the new Houses of Parliament), that Lord Mardyke next addressed him, with proposals for the purchase of the estate. So many years had elapsed since the peace, without the Rotterdam steamer bringing anything in the shape of a live Van der Helde to take possession of Hawkshill, that their repugnance to the place appeared to be insurmountable. The Earl was not, therefore, without hopes of including within his ring fence those long-coveted acres, which would render him, in his own castle,

From the centre all down to the sea,
The lord of the fowl and the brute.

"If this Netherlandish Mynheer would but listen to my proposals," he had often said to Lord Skewgill, "I'd throw down the old house, re-let the farms, and before three seasons were over, I would show you, at Mardyke, the best partridge-shooting in England."

Both the Earl and his brother-in-law, who never bothered their brains with a line of letter-press beyond the Morning Herald, the Racing Calendar, Bell's Life, and the Sporting Magazine, entertained vague ideas of Mynheers, as a class, as squat little men, encased in capacious blue skirts, with a feather perked in their caps, after the costume of Hendrik Hudson, or Rip van Winkle, as represented at a minor theatre. Great, therefore, was their surprise at sight of Adrian van der Helde, the D'Orsay of the Vivier; whose thoughts, instead of being engrossed by the price of stockfish, or sour herrings, were of Nora and Belfungus; far more eager about the weighing of the jockeys, than of any marketable commodities, wet or dry. Independent of their views upon Hawkshill, they were charmed to make so eligible an acquaintance; more especially Lord Skewgill. A *very ingenuus puer*, with a *very* well-filled pocket-book, was to him one of the finest objects in nature.

On the other hand, Adrian and Léonce were delighted to be taken by the hand by one whose name had long been familiar to them as a leading elder of the turf. Lord Mardyke's fine person, and gentlemanly address, won their confidence in a moment.

As to Skewgill, he possessed one of those open countenances, and frank deportments, which are good to their owner for a mortgage of a hundred thousand pounds. His words were so cheery, his smile so ready, his temper

so even, he was, in short, so thoroughly what England has the modesty to call, when it wants to define anything jolly or genuine, so thoroughly English! — Not a man of his acquaintance but would have trusted him on the strength of his hearty laugh, and clear brown eyes, with his wife, his character, his anything that was his.

Yet for many a long year Skewgill had been overreaching them, at elections — in horse dealing — in exchanges of land and houses; undermining their family affections by his intrigues, and guiding the leading-strings of their sons on the road to ruin. If one of his associates underwent a reverse of fortune, he hailed the smash with one of his merriest laughs; or some jovial pleasantry, that immediately went the round of the clubs, and was appended to the tale of poor So and So's ruin, like the epigram occupying the poet's corner of a newspaper that contains the details of a battle or shipwreck.

No one liked him the less. "Skewgill was such a capital fellow." His French cook and cellar were undeniable; and his pleasant voice and radiant countenance entitled him to circulate any amount of scandal, and salute his friends with piquant banter that tortured them like drops of vitriol flung in their faces. The butts he selected bore as smilingly with the pain, as the clown in the circus laughs the louder for every cut of the whip. It brought an obscure person into fashion to be the victim of one of Skewgill's good stories.

Such was the specious individual towards whom even the gelid Dutch blood of Adrian van der Helde warmed in a moment. At his earnest invitation, their baggage was dispatched at once to his residence at Braye Court. Though the house was what is called full, the elasticity of Yorkshire mansions is as proverbial as their hospitality; and the words Doncaster races and "shakedown" appear synonymous. Not that, in the present instance, the new-comers were destined to shakedowns. It was easy to dislodge a couple of nephews and a toady, and establish the strangers according to their superior pretensions.

Much as has been said and sung, more especially by foreigners, concerning the comfort and luxury of country-house life, the Netherlandish sportsmen were not a little astonished by the interior of Braye Court. In the few foreign châteaux which pretend to emulation of this costly mode of hospitality, there is always some deficiency, some ragged edge. The house is ill-lighted, or ill-warmed; or the plate ill-cleaned, or the servants ill-trained. In England alone do the table and stable service, the reception rooms and sleeping rooms exhibit the same careful perfection. Léonce was forced to admit that, even at the Trois Frères, he had never tasted such wines, or such entrées, as those of his new acquaintance: as to the turtle, turbot, and haunch, they were meat for the gods. But Adrian van der Helde, on the other hand, laid his head on his pillow that night somewhat cooled

in his project of a permanent residence at Hawkshill. If such were the habits of English life, he foresaw that he should be forced into a very humiliating position. His father's son could never pretend to an Italian confectioner, or a clerk of the kitchen. The second table at Braye Court would have put to shame the first in many a royal household of the continent.

Sir Ralph, meanwhile, was delighted with the success of his scheme. Self-conceited as Malvolio, he strutted about in his eccentric suit of *bleu barbeau*, almost as much elated as though Braye Court, its tender venison, and service of plate, were his own. If his intervention in the acquaintanceship had not secured to him a *pied à terre* at the Hôtel de Lanville for at least six months to come, Léonce must be a monster of ingratitude.

He became, however, a little nervous the following day, when, after a breakfast worthy to form the dinner of lands less remarkable for their marrow and fatness than the West Riding, he observed Léonce fastened upon by certain turf men, whose organs of conscientiousness were not very prominently developed; and heard him bungling into bets which sportsmen of sharper practice, or experience at Tattersall's, would have regarded as a joke.

It was impossible to approach him with a word of warning. For already, both Adrian and his brother-in-law had manifested impatience of his counsels. The first

move of the enemy had been to discredit the old beau as a dowager, a muff, an officious bear-leader. Skewgill had inquired, with one of his jolliest laughs, "where on earth they could have dug out that dilapidated fossil: as much dead, buried, and forgotten in English society as William the Conqueror, or Thomas-à-Becket."

Previous to starting for the course, the fidgety man of missions could not find a moment to take either of them by the button. Adrian was driven by Lord Mardyke, in his mail-phaeton; Léonce, as the *élégant* of the party, was invited to escort Lady Mardyke and a brace of pretty Viscountesses. But poor Sir Ralph was condemned to the company of the toady, and the hobble-de-hoy nephews, in a jingling old barouche, long condemned, and only brought out of the coach-house on occasion of these annual processions; usually reaching the course when the first race was over.

A helper, in his shirt sleeves, scarcely deigned to put up the steps, close the door, and cry "all right" to the postilion; and their disjointed equipage went limping half a mile after the rest, like a lame mourner at a walking funeral.

Even in the porous brain of the baronet, however, there was just then no room for anxiety. On reaching the course, every interstice was filled up with pride and satisfaction. After prolonged absence from England, the sight of so many rich equipages, beautiful faces, well-dressed men, and well-dressed horses, and above all, of

that prosperous and joyous middle class which in no county shines more than in the shire of York, made his heart sing for joy. But while he expanded into triumphant exclamations to the toady and nephews of Lord Skewgill, in prose that would have done honour to a Bridgwater Treatise, or the President of a Scientific Association, his *protégés* whisked out of sight!

Already, betting-book in hand, they were lost in abstruse mis-calculation, with faces as grave as a Rothschild's after an unexpected fall of stocks. And alas! for the credit of the country, like the traveller succoured by the Good Samaritan, they had fallen among thieves! —

CHAPTER XVII.

SUCH was the concatenation of events which, on the Saturday night ensuing, kept the fair inhabitants of Hawkshill sad and sleepless.

All day, Clémence had been fussing about the house; seeing that fresh flowers were placed in the jardinières and vases, though they had been replenished only the day before; the gravel walks re-rolled; and a certain dish of *perdrix aux choux à la Hollandaise*, which was a favourite viand of the travellers, to be abundantly provided.

When all had been placed in order, the German and Dutch papers laid open on the library table, and, as the evenings were growing cold, a fire lighted in Adrian's dressing-room, Madame van der Helde proposed to her companions to drive out and meet them, so far as a certain turnpike, uniting the Hawkshill to the Clitheroe road, by the latter of which they were to make their appearance. From thence, the woods of Mardyke Castle were perceptible, purple and lordly, in the distance; and many a conjecture was hazarded among the three, as they sat listening in vain for the sound of coming wheels, as to the object of Lord Mardyke in seeking to augment a domain already so extensive.

They waited and waited; till at last Clémence, who had less deference for horses or coachmen than her brother and husband, insisted on driving a mile or two further along the hilly road; — as if that measure would accelerate the arrival of the truants!

At length, the evening shades began to gather; and the atmosphere, always trying in that bleak district after sunset, became so chilly, that Eugénie, anxious for the health of her sister, insisted on returning home. The travellers, too late for dinner, would doubtless be home by supper-time, and the *perdrix aux choux* the more enjoyed.

Ever sanguine, Clémence suffered herself to be comforted; and though so fatigued by her long drive, that as she lay extended on the sofa, in the prettiest of *peignoirs*, selected as the favourite one of her husband, she looked deathly pale, the supper-table was lighted up, and the wines were iced almost to crystallisation. Every moment, the servants kept scuffling across the hall, to be in readiness; in the mistaken belief that a travelling carriage had entered the gates.

Nothing of the kind. Twelve o'clock — one o'clock, passed; till, at length, the increasing faintness of Clémence rendered it urgent that she should retire to bed. The supper was to be kept hot, for an hour or two, and the wines cold; in order that the servants might remain as restless and comfortless as their masters. But no one at Hawkshill, except its mistress, entertained the

slightest expectation of the wanderers' return. Luckily, railroads were not in existence, to threaten a share in the delay. In these days, apprehensions of a smash and a telegraphic summons, would have kept even the sleepest of the household painfully on the alert.

Next day, the same expectations, the same disappointments. It was not till the late hour at which, in those creep-mouse days, the London post reached Hawks-hill, that a hurried letter from Adrian explained to his wife — if explanation it could be called — that an unexpected emergency had compelled them to repair to town from Doncaster, instead of immediately returning home.

"We shall be with you on Tuesday," he wrote; "and a couple of days at Mivart's will only render me the more eager, darling Clémence, to find myself again in your arms."

So long as he called her his "darling Clémence," and wrote so tenderly, his wife was, if not satisfied, resigned. He added, that the whole party assembled at Braye Court had migrated together to London, preparatory to the next Newmarket meeting. And Madame van der Helde, intent only on preventing his accompanying his attractive new friends to the head-quarters of *le sport*, almost forgot in this new anxiety that there had been a Doncaster the preceding week.

But alas! how many, including the two individuals

dearest to her, were fated to remember it! It had been already written in gossiping letters from half the country-houses in the neighbourhood of Doncaster, and whispered in the London Clubs as the "latest intelligence from the seat of war," that "poor Vernon had lost ten thousand; that foolish fellow, Willingham, thirteen; and two foolish foreigners, no end of money: that the Ring had won largely, and that there was likely to be more than one levanter of note;" a *bulletin* of killed and wounded, washed down by a glass of claret, and forgotten ten minutes afterwards, in some newer scandal! The fact was what people cared for: the results were never thought of. How much family misery, how much family disgrace, was to arise from these winnings and losings, was nothing to the gossip-mongers. As our abstract idea of a churchyard represents a surface of green turf interspersed with head-stones or marble slabs, without heed of the hundreds of cold white faces, upturned to the sky, or hundreds of skeletons in their shrouds undergoing the humiliating process of decay, the announcement of a friend's pecuniary loss conveys only the impression of momentary annoyance. Whose business is it to inquire by what struggles the blow is to be parried, — by what lifelong sacrifices succeeded?

And so poor Vernon and that foolish fellow, Willingham (who had a wife and ten children), were dismissed, with a shrug of the shoulders, to meet the terrors of settling-day, with cheques on their bankers, or pistols at

their heads, as the clemency of indignant relations or vindictive creditors might decide.

In the instance of Adrian van der Helde, there was a person concerned, whose disgust was uncontrollable by any conventional process; a man unaccustomed to treat such matters with levity; a man whose

Grave inflexibility of soul

Nor reason could convince nor fear control;

such reason, that is, as emanates from the porticoes of St. James's Street, or such fear as arises from the pandects of a Sir Ralph Barnardiston.

Having been written to by Adrian, from Mivart's, to ask an interview on "urgent private affairs," at his villa at Stockwell, on the Sabbath-day, the worthy Jakes, a Calvinist by profession and Dutchman by temper, refused at once. The Sabbath and the villa were alike inaccessible to business. At nine A.M., on the Monday, he would meet Mr. Van der Helde in the Barbican; requesting that, if money affairs were in question, he would come unaccompanied. The old merchant saw no occasion for the intervention of the broken-down dandy.

But though fully prepared to find that his employer's son had been guilty of some grievous imprudence, and that Adrian looked to him for the means of repairing his fault, he was more startled than he had ever been in the course of his long life, on learning that he was required to supply him with the sum of six thou-

sand pounds in the course of the next four-and-twenty hours.

His negative was unqualified. It was impossible. If it were *not* impossible, he would have made it so. What would the venerable Mr. Lucas van der Helde say to such a squandering of his substance? Why was the wealth amassed by two centuries of industry, to become the booty of a gang of swindlers? He used and repeated the words advisedly. *He* was not, like Sir Ralph Barnardiston, subject to the anathema of St. James's Street.

"The plain case of the matter, my good friend, is this," said Adrian, his native language lending itself to the abrupt explicitness of the statement. "Will my father's interests be better served by allowing his son's credit to become dishonoured in a foreign country, or by the payment of a few thousand pounds?"

"What *you* call a few thousand pounds is more than his year's income, when your own has been disbursed," replied Zelters, firmly. "As to your credit being dishonoured in this country, Sir, I should consider it a blessing, if the disgrace prevented you from rejoining the society into which you have most unfortunately plunged."

The young spendthrift saw that he might nearly as well address himself to the wooden desk before which Jakes Zelters was seated, as himself.

"If you had allowed my friend Sir Ralph Barnardiston to mediate between us," he nevertheless persisted, "he would have explained to you, better than I can, who am less versed in English liabilities of this nature, that Lord Mardyke, to whose brother-in-law this money is chiefly due, is disposed to assist me in an immediate settlement with him; taking in exchange a mortgage on the Hawkshill estate, for the purchase of which he has long, it seems, been in treaty —"

"— And the sale of which my honoured friend Lucas Van der Helde has positively declined."

"Only because I all but promised to make it my winter quarters, instead of returning to Brussels. You are aware of my father's desire to weaken my connection with Belgium."

"Your father feels and acts like a good patriot; and you have certainly now done your utmost to confirm his opinion, that a residence at Brussels has been disadvantageous. But no matter. Brussels is not our present affair —"

"Our present affair is, that you should inform him of Clémence and myself having positively decided against a residence at Hawkshill. We are desirous that the place should be sold; and a customer offers himself in Lord Mardyke. Where can be the demur?"

"That Lord Mardyke is a bad customer. I can sell the property to better advantage."

"You speak to the purpose, sir. But will *your* customer advance the money I require?"

"Certainly not. You can afford him no legal security. This lord of yours deals loosely, because his practices are loose."

"There is no talking to you on business, Mr. Zelters," cried Adrian, snatching up his hat. "Why not have said at once that you had predetermined against palliating the ruin which, in an unguarded moment, I have brought upon myself? My English friends will enable me to make an easier bargain with some Jew."

"But for my respect for your father and wife, young sir, I would allow you to depart for such a purpose," said the old Dutchman, apparently unmoved, though his features gave an unconscious twitch at the allusion to Clémence, whose sweet temper and kindness to her dependants had, during his sojourn at Hawkshill, won largely on his regard. "But thus much will I do in your behalf. — My name shall be given as a guarantee for the payment, within ten days, of your debt; and I flatter myself that the signature of Zelters and Son will be accounted good security by the West-End bankers, for seventy-and-seven times the sum of which you have been pillaged. Our minister, if more than my name is required, will endorse it. The Baron has high acceptance in the world of fashion as a man of spirit and breeding, to neither of which qualities I pretend. I will run over

meanwhile to the Hague, confer with your father, and settle with him concerning the disposal of the estate, and the liquidation of the claim for which I have engaged myself."

To put in motion all this cumbrous machinery appeared to Adrian a far more awkward way of extricating him from the dilemma, than by preparing a deed for the simple signature of the Earl of Mardyke. But no further concession was to be obtained from the sturdy Jakes. All he would do was to attest in writing what he had uttered by word of mouth; and undertake to procure from Baron F—, with whom he was in constant communication, his co-operation in the arrangement.

"And on no account, sir," added Mr. Zelters, after seeing him place the paper in his pocket-book — "on no account bring down upon me that pompous, empty-headed, empty-handed baronet, who is the latent cause of the mischief."

"On that head, be at ease," replied Adrian. "Sir Ralph has already started for Brussels, to execute some business for my brother-in-law. Léonce did not judge it desirable to absent himself from this country while we have debts of honour undischarged."

"*He, too!*" ejaculated the old merchant, uplifting his hands and eyes in compassion. "But I might have guessed it! Two thoughtless, godless boys," added he, when Adrian had quitted the room — "their heads

turned by vanity and presumption, were not to be trusted in such company. Were it not for the wife of the one, and sister of the other, I should say, 'Let them suffer for their sins!'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIR RALPH BARNARDISTON had indeed accepted, or rather courted, the "mission" of raising on young De Lanville's already impoverished estate, a sum of nearly three thousand pounds, for which he was liable; but simply with the intention to give instructions to the notary of the family; and, on pretence of indisposition, return no more to the field of their defeats. So hurried were his movements, that on *this* occasion his varnish and polishing brushes were really left behind.

Sir Ralph resembled those sea-fowl, which, on the approach of a tempest, subside altogether out of sight. He had not moral stamina for what he called "scenes;" and whenever one of his friends was involved in domestic trouble, he suddenly recalled to mind a long-neglected liver complaint, which served as a pretext for retirement.

His absence from London, at this juncture, was invaluable to Adrian. There was no longer a chance of his having recourse to discreditable expedients; and people are far more disposed to aid the defenceless, than those who have unworthy auxiliaries.

Towards the close of the week, however, the anxieties of Clémence grew beyond endurance. Dr. Moss,

summoned to Hawkshill by Nannie, declared her to be suffering from nervous fever — in her situation, a very alarming attack; and Eugénie lost not a moment in requiring the return of her brother-in-law. Believing him to be occupied in London only with idle pastimes, and probably on the eve of departure for Newmarket, she did not hesitate to demand his immediate attendance.

The delinquents accordingly made their appearance; in a plight how different from the triumphant guise in which they quitted Hawkshill! They had undergone, in the interim, the terrible reverses of a betting-man's career; in *their* instance great in proportion to their inexperience in a science, which deserves to be classed among the black arts. With drooping ears and dejected countenances, like hounds returning from a baffled chase, they made their appearance just as the fair inhabitants of Hawkshill had retired for the night.

Adrian was instantly on his knees beside the sick couch of the weeping woman whose health, whose very life, he had endangered; but with whom it needed only a few kind words from his lips to restore himself to confidence. His garbled tale, assigning the most plausible motives for his delay, appeared to her the most natural thing in the world, and insured her a good night's rest.

In order to leave them to the unembarrassed explanation of their feelings, Eugénie stole down in her dressing-gown to the dining-room, where her gay brother, his appetite unimpaired by his mischances, was enjoying

an ample supper. She could not but perceive that he looked haggard and weary. But this might be the result of his long journey. As to interrogating him in the uncompromising style adopted by Clémence towards her husband, she was too much afraid of learning what was painful and humiliating, to put his candour to the proof.

To chicken pie and light claret succeeded a cigar; and, as the exhausted traveller extended himself on a lounging chair, with the aromatic fumes encircling his head, the delicate nature of Eugénie de Lanville recoiled from the *air libertin* with which this beloved brother was becoming gradually infected. His countenance was already sallow and careworn. His dress was disordered — his voice hoarse — his speech incoherent.

“What has become of *la petite paysanne*?” said he, suddenly addressing his sister.

“Nannie Balfour? — In bed and asleep. She will leave us to-morrow. Nannie has only remained at Hawkshill to assuage the misery I have been suffering on Clémence’s account.”

“She must not go, *ma petite sœur*. You must manage to detain her here.”

“I could not even ask it. She is wanted at home. She is worried and out of spirits. She has only stayed hitherto out of kindness to myself.”

“Then make her stay a little longer, out of kindness to me.”

“To you, Léonce?”

"Do you remember, Génie, endeavouring one day to persuade me that Nannie would make me the best wife in the world?"

"I also remember your disgust and indignation at the proposal."

"Well — I have altered my mind. Nannie Balfour must become Comtesse de Lanville."

"While you announce it with that supercilious smile, I perceive, of course, that you are in jest."

"Never more miserably in earnest. The marriage must take place. Why should I deceive you, Eugénie? The dowry of old Balfour's daughter will save me from destruction!"

Mademoiselle de Lanville replied by rising and resuming her bed-candle.

"Childish!" exclaimed Léonce, shrugging his shoulders at her air of indignation. "Far better contemplate seriously a catastrophe only too grievously indispensable. — I am half ruined. You must have long suspected it, Eugénie. My last winter at Paris, — especially my last Chantilly, — doubled me up. What has since chanced at Doncaster, you will learn in process of time. And now, unless that old archblunderer, Sir Ralph, should manage to gather grapes from thorns, and persuade Brugmann and Co. to advance me fifty thousand francs, *sur hypothèque*, there is an end of poor Léonce de Lanville!"

Eugénie set down her candle on the sideboard, and returned breathless and colourless to her place.

"Dear Léonce," she faltered, "you are not yourself to-night. You are excited, — disordered. — Do not tell me what, to-morrow, you may repent to have uttered."

"I shall repent nothing. — My day for repentance is over. — I am grown desperate. — For some time past — for the last three winters, both in Paris and Brussels, to say nothing of Baden and Homburg, when the winters were over — I have been gradually melting away my patrimony. *Ecorner sa fortune* is a word easily said. But there comes a time when there remains no fortune to be *écorné*. When I arrived in England, my income for the next four years was bespoken; and till I am five-and-twenty, I have no power to sell. So that, even if Barnardiston can persuade Brugmann to advance me the means of redeeming my honour, I shall have no means of subsistence for an age. I must shut up the Hôtel de Lanville, — let it, if possible, — and live as I can, on one of my farms in the Ardennes."

"The misfortune may be provided for," said Eugénie, stricken to the heart by all she was learning. "The present dilemma appears the first consideration. Can Adrian do nothing to assist you? He loves you like himself."

"Adrian is as deeply involved as I am; nay, worse. For nothing would surprise me less than that old Van der Helde should call a family council and have him interdicted!" *

* A form of French law by which spendthrifts, as well as lunatics, are deprived of the control of their fortune.

"What a disgrace! And those to whom her prudence is unknown, will, perhaps, accuse my sister of a share in his extravagance. — But how, dear Léonce, are we to conceal from her what has been passing at Doncaster? — The physician here declares that her state of health requires the utmost care."

"Of course. And the loss of his promised heir would be almost as painful to old Van der Helde, as the loss of his money."

"It is of Clémence, not of old Van der Helde, I am thinking."

"As regards Clémence, then, I have exacted of Adrian that he shall make no distressing avowals. Within a week, something may be negotiated for his extrication; and if Barnardiston can make an arrangement to my advantage, we must quit this place."

"Not till my sister's health enables us to do so with safety."

"Who wishes it? My little sister must not fancy she holds a monopoly of virtue and humanity. But to think, Eugénie, that all these evils might be remedied by my marriage with Nannie Balfour!" said he, hastily, perceiving that Mademoiselle de Lanville was again about to leave him.

"Why desire to substitute one evil for another? — Reflect how you reviled me for wanting to stain our family escutcheon by such a *mésalliance*!"

"Our family escutcheon may become disfigured by

blots of a darker nature! — That I was sincere at the time, you know; for I was even then in a financial position such as rendered a rich wife more than desirable. You may, therefore, give credit to my sincerity when I assure you that, knowing at that time of your friend only that she had a dozen or so of thousand pounds lying in the hands of old Zelters, and as much more in prospect, I saw in her only the daughter of a wealthy boor, — the descendant of servants, — and scorned the notion of making her my wife. But more than a month spent in her company — more than a month's daily experience of her charming temper and qualities, — has won me completely to your opinion. You must have noticed, before you left Hawkshill, Génie, how constantly I was by her side."

"I attributed your attentions to courtesy towards your sister's friend."

"No, — to prepossession, — to love as warm as I fear I am capable of feeling. Had it not been for the superciliousness of that old blockhead, Sir Ralph, I should have long ago apprised you of my change of sentiments."

"In that case, I pity you, indeed."

"Do you mean to infer that you think Nannie disinclined towards me?"

"Far worse. In that case, her sentiments, like your own, might change. — She is attached to another."

"Impossible! — That child!"

"She is as old as Clémence when she made her love-match with Adrian."

"But Nannie Balfour has scarcely been out of her village, which contains only quarriers and hinds."

"I can say no more without betraying her confidence. — You asked me, just now, to give credit to your word, dear Léonce, in a matter that required some amount of faith. I now require you to believe in mine, that the affections of this poor girl are irrevocably engaged."

When left to his reflections by his sister's departure for the night, the intelligence she had communicated occupied the thoughts of the Count de Lanville far more than his own disastrous position. The *petite paysanne* in love! — Nannie Balfour inaccessible to Monsieur le Comte de Lanville, with five hundred years of illustrious genealogy! — He could not believe it.

"*Forse è ver, ma pero non credibile,*" muttered he, unconsciously quoting from Ariosto. — And when he closed his eyes that night, on a somewhat uneasy pillow, his latest anxiety regarded his morrow's meeting with Nannie.

He was resolved to make himself master of her secret. Which among the nameless horde with whom she had hitherto consorted, did she distinguish with her preference? — Was it too late to hurl him from his throne? — Women are so changeable, so plastic. — Axioms of two thousand years' antiquity have so defined

them. Hitherto, he had not appeared sufficiently devoted to this child of the hills. — He would show himself in a better light, — he would show himself as he was. — Instead of wasting his mornings in partridge-shooting, he would ride and walk with Nannie. “*Je l’aimerai tellement,*” said he, as Rocca said of Madame de Staël, — “*qu’elle finira par m’épouser.*”

It would be hard, indeed, if the gallantry of a man of his manners and appearance could not efface the impression made by some unpolished Lancashire savage — “some cotton-spinner, pig-driver, methodist parson, — no matter what.”

All the arrogance of his nature recoiled from the idea of such rivalry; and the penniless *roué* slept to dream of heraldic escutcheons, the Ratisbon college, and the first crusade.

How different, alas! were the waking meditations, that night, of his gentle and afflicted sister! —

The following morning, at a later hour than usual, for the quiet of the country had prolonged the slumbers impaired by recent excesses and recent cares, Léonce, after an elaborate toilet, entered the breakfast-room, at Hawkshill, as much intent upon woman-slaughter as any of the monster-husbands of the present day.

To his utter disappointment, it was unoccupied! — Adrian and his sister were in attendance on Clémence, whom Dr. Moss had already arrived from Ilsington to visit.

"And Miss Balfour?" he inquired of the servants.
"Gone home. Two hours before, she had mounted her pony to return to Gridlands."

And alone! What an opportunity had he lost by his ill-timed somnolency! But he had not the smallest pretext for following her to Middledale. He must wait till one or other of his sisters entrusted him with a commission. Yet how absurd that he, Léonce, Comte de Lanville, with sixteen quarterings, should be consulting the etiquettes of life in regard to a Lancashire farmer's daughter, who had never so much as seen a coat of arms or worn a crinoline.

But she was gone. With a heart aching quite as sorely as those she left behind, she was about to resume the duties of her natural sphere, in a spot recently endeared by the attachment of a girlish heart. That brawling beck had appeared a beautiful stream, and the furzy hill-side a picturesque object, when she last wandered through the village with Maurice. Even on that fatal night, during the visit of her aunt and cousin, when he had obtained a momentary interview with her among the holly and bramble thickets skirting the garden of Gridlands, and after pouring into her ears avowals of passionate love, renounced her, and bade her adieu for ever, the scene, as exhibited in striking relief of light and shade by a full orb'd moon, had impressed itself on her memory as indelibly as the orchard walls of Capulet's garden may have done on the young heart of Juliet.

But now, the glory of the spot had departed. All the poetry of Gridlands was gone for ever. Middledale had subsided into the rugged hamlet of mean hovels, and dusty roads, depicted at the opening of our story. The coarse evening pipe of her father and the good Pairson, irritated her nerves after the fragrant cigars of Hawkshill. Her favourite books had, during her absence, been carefully locked up by her father. Her garden had been neglected, that all hands might assist in potato-digging. The place looked utterly cheerless. But this was not the worst. There still awaited her a first visit to Hawyer's Cottage!

Madame de Sévigné observes in one of her letters, that "after having accepted exorbitant obligations, the only way to get out of the scrape is by a little ingratitude." Nannie, though she had been recently initiated for the first time, at Hawkshill, in that admirable manual of worldly wisdom, was not likely to adopt the precept. As soon as she had fulfilled her duties in her father's house, she hastened — no, not hastened — she dragged her slow steps heavily along the road to Hawyer's.

Something, however, in the aspect of the place, soothed her by its unexpected cheerfulness. The chimney was smoking for Dinah's afternoon tea. The tall Michaelmas daisies on either side the gate, purple with bloom, had attracted hundreds of wild bees from the heather of the Moors; while over the little porch, hung tangles of passion flower, from a tree which Maurice and herself

had planted four years before, and which had successfully defied the rude winters of the north. The aspect of the poor cripple's cottage was, in fact, far brighter than that of the grander elevation at Gridlands.

"I was expecting you, my child," said Mrs. Varnham, after a feeble embrace. And Nannie learned by that tender salutation, that, in spite of what had passed at their last meeting, she was dear as ever. "Almost the first thing I heard this morning, was the ring of Brownie's trot, upon the road. Instinctively, I recognised his step, and knew that, before the day was over, you would be by my side."

"I should have been here many days ago," replied Nannie, in some confusion. "But my friends at Hawkshill were afraid of being left alone among strangers; and latterly, the health of Madame van der Helde has rendered us anxious."

"I know it, I know it," interrupted her friend. "Dr. Moss informed me of the cause of your delay."

"Dr. Moss has been here, then? You have been yourself suffering?"

"A trifle — a nothing. Besides, it was easy for him, on his way home, to look in upon his old patient."

"And he told you —"

"That my little friend, Nannie Balfour, was valued at Hawkshill as she deserved; that she proved an invaluable companion to the strangers."

"But about yourself. What did he tell you about yourself?"

"What he has been telling me for many years past, Nannie, that, in my case, patience is the best doctor; that I must never look to be well. No matter. Our dear David prescribes for me more satisfactorily. *He* tells me that the stormiest day has its close; that I *may* look to be well, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. You do not yet fully know the value of that prescription, Nannie. May you never learn it, my child, through excess of worldly trouble."

Tears glittering in the eyes of Nannie, warned the poor cripple that she had proposed to receive her with a cheerful countenance. Another moment, and she was exhibiting to her quondam pupil a veil of the most delicate workmanship, on which she had been employed for the last three weeks. Unintermitting labour! She had not squandered her time in the selfish indulgence of her sorrow.

"I have been wanting to finish it," said she, "against the return to Ilsington of little Edith Rawson, who has been spending a month with her grandfather, as you probably heard from Mr. Balfour, when he visited you at Hawkshill."

Nannie recalled to mind, with a sigh, how small a part David Hurdis and his family had occupied in their conversation.

"Her mother is to fetch her home in a few days,"

rejoined the cripple. "By that time, I hope to have executed my order. It is for a wedding, Nannie," added she, with a smile; "and one is bound to be punctual, you know, in all that regards a wedding."

"I wish I could help you," said Nannie, gravely. "But my needle wants the experience of yours. I never saw work, in any degree comparable to yours, except Mademoiselle de Lanville's; and even *hers* is inferior."

"She probably learnt her art where mine was obtained," rejoined the cripple, in a low tone — "in a convent."

This allusion recalled to Nannie's memory the bitter remark of the Liverpool attorney, concerning Mrs. Varnham — that in her youth she had forsaken her God. She, too, then, had been reared in the Romish communion. But however deeply interested in the question, the young girl dared not pursue her interrogations. She could as soon have breathed to her the name of Maurice! —

CHAPTER XIX.

NEVER had the taciturnity of her father so weighed upon the spirits of Nannie as while presiding that evening at his tea-table. But she would rather he had been altogether silent, than utter the few words he let fall.

"Did neighbour Varnham show you her son's picture?" he inquired, on learning that she had spent the afternoon at Hawyer's Cottage. "I found her crying over it, the day after the lad made sail."

His daughter replied briefly in the negative. But it grieved her that her friend should have maintained this reserve towards her; — *her*, whom she had, nevertheless, addressed by the endearing name of daughter!

"John Rawson and his wife had been a-thinking, this year or two past," resumed Michael Balfour, "to get her to take apprentice the second girl of theirs, who's a great hand at fine work. Little Edith could have boarded with her grandfather; and by neighbour Varnham's teaching, might have been put in a famous way of earning her bread. In time, maybe, she might have set up a shop for herself in Ilsin'ton. The Rawsons are a large family to keep idle."

"And what made them alter their views, father?"

"Only that after what had been hinted by old Macglashan, it wouldn't have been quite the thing for an honest man's child to bide under her roof."

"That was no suggestion of our dear, good David's," cried Nannie, eagerly. "David is too charitable and too just to condemn her on such vague accusations."

But her eagerness served only to close the lips of her father. He had not intended to be so communicative; and from that moment, till he bestowed upon her his nightly blessing previously to retiring to rest, said not another word.

Poor Nannie! The room had seemed dull while he sat there, with half-closed eyes, sipping his tea audibly out of a tea-spoon. But after he was gone, after the tea things had been removed, and nothing was left for companionship but the grim old clock, whose ticktack seemed to reproach her that the voice of home, which she had so often yearned after in her school-day absence from Gridlands, should have become so tedious, — she almost wished for him back again. Anything rather than that trying *tête-à-tête* with self! For self spoke still more rebukingly to Nannie than the grim old clock. She was just beginning to ask herself whether, if she retired to bed, sleep would put an end to the throbbing of her temples and throbbing of her heart, when a loud tap on the window shutters of the parlour, which closed from without, startled her from her reverie. After a moment's alarm, convinced that the sound was the coinage of her

own somewhat disturbed imagination, she again leaned her aching brow upon her hand, and endeavoured to recollect her scattered thoughts, of long sea voyages, and the pains and penalties of life in Bengal; when a second tap, still louder than the first, satisfied her she was not mistaken. A little flurried — for the hour was late, and the house detached from the village — she was half inclined to wake up her father. For the present, however, she contented herself with desiring Dinah to call in one of the men, who was still astir in the cow-yard, to unbar the house door, and ascertain the object and quality of this mysterious visitor.

But her commission was probably overheard from without; for, as she crossed the little hall, the reiterated sound of her own name arrested her steps and enlightened her mind. With a joyful cry of “Elisha!” she instantly rushed forward to unfasten the bolts, and herself admit him into the house.

Yes, it was indeed her cousin who met her view as she opened the door; and partly under the excitement of relief from terror, and partly from the comfort of finding a companion for her loneliness, she folded him in her arms, and kissed him with a sister’s greeting.

“I am so glad, so *very* glad, you are come!” cried she, after issuing orders to provide for his refreshment. “But why steal upon us thus?”

“I dismissed the chaise in the village. I was afraid of alarming my uncle by so late a visit.”

"It was only your cousin you were not afraid of frightening to death!"

"I am very weary," was all he could reply to her challenge — "I have been on the road since yesterday."

"But why so much haste?" she inquired, after carefully installing him in his favourite chair, and preparing some tea to his liking — "and why did not aunt Dorthy accompany you?"

"It would have caused delay. And it was essential to me to obtain an early answer to a question I want to ask you."

Nannie's heart sank within her. Did this question originate in information which he might have received from their common guardian?

"Ask it, then," said she, endeavouring to smile, "since your curiosity is so pressing."

"Not till I have rested a while," replied Ely, pressing his hand upon his heart, as she had often seen him do, in earlier years, when suffering from attacks of pain. Yet he did not look ill. His health and strength had accomplished wonderful progress since their last meeting. The slender boy, though still slender, had grown tall and manly-looking; and though the lineaments of his face were still as delicate and his complexion as transparent as a woman's, the fair hair, brushed back from his fine forehead, developed the expression of his intellectual countenance.

"Wait, then, till to-morrow, dearest Ely," said Nannie,

cordially extending her hand. "There can be no such vast hurry. You cannot leave us again to-morrow? You will at least spend a few days at Gridlands. Your presence will be such a comfort — such a *great* comfort to me."

Thus entreated, it was not likely he should persist in the intention with which he had entered the house. He had, in fact, already desired the postboy to return for him on the morrow at noon.

"If I find that some business I have to transact in London can be accomplished by letter," said Elisha, fondly pressing her offered hand, "I may be able to pass a few days with you — and my uncle."

"Thanks, thanks! But what is all this of business in London? Are you becoming so great as well as so learned a man, cousin, that nothing short of London will content you? Do you remember how often we used to sit together at sunset on the shore, at Blackpool, wondering whether you would ever grow strong enough for journeys and voyages, that we might see the world together?"

"Perhaps it was *that* hope which strengthened my frame, Nannie," he replied. "I am a different being now. That close warehouse at Manchester, and that stifling, smoky atmosphere, checked the very life within me. Clifton has altered my nature."

"It has not altered your voice, dear Ely. It seems so pleasant to hear it again. I have been much among

strangers lately. This is my first day at home; and home and you together, seem such a natural combination!"

They soon fell into family discussions, as though they had never parted: each unconscious that, at *their* age, those who part for any length of time, cannot meet again. Time works such transformations! In *their* case the expanded intellect of one, the aroused vigour of the other, had extinguished the simple Nannie and sickly Elisha of Manchester.

They soon fell to commenting upon the books sent her by her cousin — that memorable birthday present; and a thousand little topics were discussed between them, till Martha, whose yawns had long been audible from her retreat, brought in bed-candles, with the significant intimation that Mr. Hildyard's room was ready, and that, as the night was cold, there was a good fire a-glow in the grate. The cousins had not perceived that the small hours were come, or that they had sat out the one by which they had been seated.

That night, exhausted as he was by his long journey, young Hildyard could not close his eyes. Hour after hour, he lay awake — his mind dazzled by visions of love and joy. The tender reception bestowed on him by his cousin, her obvious delight at his unexpected arrival, seemed to express sentiments towards him of which, at his last sojourn at Gridlands, he had sometimes doubted the existence or the possibility. He had

even fancied, at times, that she regarded him with the same humiliating pity which had so often galled him during his infirm childhood. But now, she seemed to love him as much — *almost* as much as he loved *her*!

Never had he fancied her half so beautiful as when, on the sudden lapsing of her fears at his arrival, she sprang to his neck and bad him welcome. By that hearth-side where they had been sitting together, as in their childhood, hand in hand, the loveliness of her flushed cheek, and the kindly feelings beaming from her eyes, had kindled unearthly rapture in his own. It was almost morning before he slept.

Daylight creeping through the curtains, and steps upon the gravel walk beneath his window, warned him that it was time to be astir; and up he started, expecting that the early riser by whom he had been disturbed would prove his uncle, proceeding to enjoy his morning pipe under the lime-trees.

A glance from his window not only convinced him of his mistake, but filled him with consternation. Thoroughly at home, with a cigar in his mouth, and attired in one of those fanciful shooting-dresses which Highland sports first brought into vogue, but which have been caricatured on the continent, (on the plea that the greater the eccentricity, the stronger the proof that the wearer is accustomed to sport on his own territories, and defy remark), sauntered Léonce de Lanville; his slouched beaver and pointed

beard imparting a Rubens-like character to his handsome head.

In this singular figure, young Hildyard had little difficulty in recognising one of the new inhabitants of Hawkshill; of whom, and of Nannie's intimacy with them, he had heard only too much from Jakes Zelters. But that he should be already thus intimately installed at Gridlands! That he should be cutting off with his riding-whip so unceremoniously the heads of Nannie's favourite carnations!

What business had he there at such a time?

Before Elisha had in any degree recovered his astonishment, or half completed his toilet, — and how homely appeared his own garments compared with the gay plumage of the foreign bird strutting below, — his uncle was in the room.

“Nannie wouldn't have me disturbed last night, lad, to bid thee welcome,” said the farmer; “and this morning I wouldn't have *her* disturb *thee* till thou hadst slept thy sleep out. But bustle about now, Ely! I've a sight to show thee below.”

“I have seen it,” replied his nephew, with something of a derisive smile upon his lips.

“It seems that the poor lady at Hawkshill is growing worse and worse, and she and her sister won't hear of less than getting Nannie back among them again. So they've sent their brother and one of their saddle horses to fetch her. Such a first-rate beauty as 't is! Come

down to the stables, Ely, and have a look at it. In one of my rough stalls, among my rough nags, she looks like a queen in a satin gown!"

Young Hildyard was a little relieved to find that it was with Mademoiselle de Lanville's high-bred mare, and not Mademoiselle de Lanville's high-bred brother, that his uncle had proposed to dazzle his eyes.

"And when does Nannie start? Shall I see her before she goes?" he inquired in an embarrassed voice.

"Goes *where*, lad? She's only busy writing a bit of a note to explain to her foreign friends, that she can't leave home — that thou'rt here along with us."

"I should be sorry that my visit placed any restraint on her inclination," said Ely, stiffly.

"But her inclination is to stay at home. I heard her say as much to that young foreign chap, the moment he explained the object of his coming. — I didn't rightly understand their jabber. But I could hear by his tone that he was beseeching and remonstrating. And when he found 't was no mortal use, off he went into the garden in a huff, while Nannie betook herself to her desk; and I see he's making sad havoc among the flowers, for pure spite and vexation."

Welcome was this intelligence to Elisha: still more welcome the sound of horses' hoofs on the Hawkshill road, followed by the hurried trot of the well-mounted groom, and the beautiful Zerlina he was leading, which had to keep up with his angry pace. But more acceptable

would it have been not to have found him at all within the sanctuary of Gridlands. While working out his probation at a distance, that quiet spot had always appeared to him such hallowed ground, so safe a retreat! To him, his sweet and innocent cousin appeared an especial gift of providence, conceded to be the crowning blessing of his once valueless life; and he could not bear to have her even gazed upon by eyes profane.

On rejoining her at the breakfast table, he found her even more gracious, and thought her even more lovely, than on the preceding night. But with a lover's jealous instinct, he could not help attributing the archness which, for a moment, laughed in her hazel eyes, to something connected with her recent interview.

"You are right," said she, frankly, when he taxed her with her scarcely repressed mirth. — "*I am* amused at having countermined a mine! They wanted me back at Hawkshill, and could think of no better plea than to pretend that Madame van der Helde, being worse, was constantly asking for me. Whereas a little foot-messenger who leaves Hawkshill for Middledale every morning at day-break, to gather mushrooms for the French cook, brought me tidings, this morning, of her very great amendment, half an hour before Léonce made his appearance. His diplomacy was consequently defeated."

"Léonce!" — Cousin Ely, so proud whenever she called him by his Christian name, was grieved at hearing so precious a privilege lavished on a stranger.

"A mount on Zerlina, too, was a bribe which Monsieur de Lanville evidently thought irresistible. But I had promised myself to you and Brownie, this morning, dearest cousin, and if you have finished breakfast, I am now at your service."

The farmer had left them to their tardy meal. His men were busy with their last day's potato-digging, and he was anxious to keep an eye on the crop.

Down the nut-walk, therefore, sauntered the cousins. Within doors, Nannie was too much intruded upon by Martha with questions concerning the household interests of Gridlands, to be secure from interruption. Under the lime-trees, they should be more at ease for conversation.

"I want to ask you a question, Nannie, which you alone can answer," said Elisha Hildyard, abruptly, as soon as they had established themselves in the accustomed seat of Michael and the Pairson: Sancho, the favourite old dog of poor Mrs. Balfour, having established himself in the shade at their feet. "I want you to tell me whether, in the happy days awaiting our married life, it would afford you gratification to become the mistress of Hawkshill, in place of the residence in one of our southern counties which it is at present my intention to purchase?"

"Of Hawkshill?" exclaimed Nannie, in dismay. The allusion to her future destinies being secondary at that

moment, in her mind, to this sudden announcement of the dislodgments of her friends.

"The state of the case is this," continued Elisha, endeavouring to appear composed. "The fortune left by my father, is far more considerable — four times more considerable — than the one we equally inherit. He was at once a speculative and a careful man; nor did my thrifty mother ever diminish his substance by the outlay of a penny. On your account, I rejoice at this; for they have provided nobly for their successors."

Nannie was beginning to feel distressed — almost angry. She hated these allusions to mercenary interests. But her cousin chose to be heard.

"I need not tell you," he said, "that prior to entering into trade on his own account, my father was a clerk in the counting-house of Zelters and Company. In their hands, consequently, he deposited his gains, as the world prospered with him; and by them, those funds have been prudently invested. When, therefore, the estate of Hawkshill came recently into the market, old Jakes be-thought himself of his clients. Finding there was some probability that the house with which our family has been more than a century connected, was likely to be sold under its value in order to be razed to the ground, it struck him that Dorty Hildyard and her son might wish to become the purchasers, and wrote to give us the refusal."

"You — aunt Dorty — the purchasers of Hawkshill!"

exclaimed Nannie, aghast at what, against her better reason, she considered a sacrilege.

"Why not? We are able, not alone to make the purchase, but to reside there as becomes the place," said Elisha, his usual meekness expanding for a moment into self-assertion as he discovered her misgivings. "My mother, biassed by the attachments of her youth, is willing to make the acquisition, in order to preserve from destruction the house endeared by early associations. But it is *your* word, my heart's darling, that must decide. If you prefer that quaint old place, it shall be ours. If, on the contrary, you are tempted by a more cheerful neighbourhood, and a residence rendered more commodious by modern inventions and more sightly by modern taste, we will either buy or build elsewhere; and Zelters and Son can sign and seal with Lord Mardyke."

"I should be thankful to have you and aunt Dorthy established at Hawkshill," replied Nannie, evasively; "and I doubt not that she would be happier in returning to the haunts of her youth, than in taking possession of the finest castle in the land."

"But it is not of her inclinations we are talking, it is of *yours*," persisted Elisha, vexed at what seemed almost an obstinate or affected obtuseness on the part of his cousin.

"*My* inclinations, then, — can you doubt it? are decidedly in favour of the purchase. If the place must

pass out of possession of the family who for more than a century and a half have called it their own, better far that it should be into yours, than that of a dissolute nobleman, who regards it only as an investment."

"Still, you do not answer me, Nannie," said Elisha, as peevishly as was compatible with his gentle nature. "Should you, dearest, be personally gratified by the purchase?"

"Unquestionably," she replied, perceiving that he was annoyed by her seeming unconcern. "How could I be otherwise! I am friendless here, as regards companions of my own age. Think how it would improve the dreariness of our life at Gridlands, to have you both so near me. Aunt Dorthy, so kind and considerate to my poor father: you, cousin, so gentle, so forbearing with myself. Only seven miles apart! How we should read together, how consult over our reading! What a ready interchange of books, and thoughts, and feelings! — No further fear of loneliness! — No more despondency! — Elisha always at hand to enlighten and console. Yes, dear cousin! Accept Mr. Zelter's offer. I am far too selfish not to wish you would settle at Hawkshill."

"But not alone, Nannie. Unless you were with me — my bride, my wife — what would Hawkshill, or any other place, be to me."

"Do not set your heart on impossibilities, dear Ely," answered Miss Balfour, turning, with fear and trembling

from his earnest gaze. "So long as my father lives, I will never quit Gridlands."

"But my uncle is old and infirm. He might be induced to quit his farm."

"Not by me. I have no wish to desert the home of my childhood," said Nannie, almost with a shudder; for she saw that the long-dreaded explanation was at hand.

"And can you, to indulge this selfish prejudice, reject the entreaties, the prayers, of one whom you generously admit to be so dear to you?" cried young Hildyard, again seizing her hand.

"Dear as a brother; dear as an esteemed and valued brother; dear as Léonce de Lanville is to Eugénie and Clémence."

"A young girl's maidenly scruple!" interrupted her cousin. "With such love, I am more than content."

"No," — faltered Nannie, — feeling that she owed it to herself and him to be explicit. "Not when you know that another holds a higher place in my affections."

"Another?" — exclaimed her cousin, starting to his feet. "Do you mean to say, Nannie, that a stranger has superseded me in your heart?" —

An expressive silence was her reply.

"The coxcomb of this morning, perhaps!" cried he, gasping for breath.

"Monsieur de Lanville — the acquaintance of a

month?" exclaimed Nannie, with indignation. "No; one whom, like yourself, dear Ely, I have known from childhood; for whom my regard has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength."

"Maurice Varnham!" was the scarcely articulate ejaculation of the heart-broken young man.

"Yes! *Maurice*, — whom I shall perhaps never behold again. It is to you only, my cousin, my friend, that I have confided, or ever will confide, the weakness of my heart. But it is a prepossession I shall never shake off. It is a prepossession I shall carry to the grave!"

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN, the following spring, the first blow of the hammer was given towards the demolition of Hawkshill, the working population of the district — a sparse and uncultivated race — raised a feeble “hurrah!” moved, not alone by the love of destruction so prevalent in rude nature, but, according to their own statement, because “the estate now belonged to a true British nobleman, and because the frog-eating French folks were druv out of the land.”

At that epoch, a detestation of “frog-eating French folks” was still inculcated as a virtue; if not precisely from the pulpit, certainly from the hustings; and all persons speaking a foreign tongue, were “frog-eating French folk,” in the eyes of the mob.

Their Dutch neighbours at Hawkshill had become, as it were, naturalised among them; had adopted their language, and exhibited their complexion; were good Protestants, and good housewives. Royal intermarriages, too, have, time immemorial, rendered England and Holland affectionate neighbours. But every Middledale quarrier who had recently encountered on the highway that laughing cavalcade of joyous strangers, with their well-groomed horses and flowing plumes, and been made

to scramble aside into the ditch by the haughty caracoling of Léonce de Lanville's beautiful barb, was rejoiced to hear that Hawkshill had changed hands; and that a building firm at Preston had purchased, and agreed to cart away within a month, the materials of the old house.

In point of fact, no one had any cause for regret on the occasion; gentle or simple, antiquarian or novelty-monger. By especial clause in the sale, the family pictures and books, and the gracious gifts of King William, of immortal memory, were reserved as heirloom, and shipped at Fleetwood for Schevening, in a barque inscribed, on its capacious stern, with the names of Van der Helde and Co. The furniture had been already disposed of by auction; and every trace of the past was gradually disappearing from the spot. A considerable allotment of timber was marked for the ensuing fall; and when summer and its roses made their appearance, nothing remained of the old Dutch mansion, except uneradicable traces of the flower-garden upstarting with officious bloom, among heaps of rubbish and broken bricks, fragments of decayed wood and scatterings of rusty iron.

New keepers, on the other hand, were seen perambulating the estate. Old tenants had received notice to quit; and among those who remained, an untold number of pheasants' eggs had been distributed. It was made incumbent on them to rear game for their new landlord,

as carefully as they had been heretofore accustomed to bring up their children.

Michael Balfour, little aware that he had been on the point of seeing his own nephew established at the old place, looked on with the unconcern which grows on apathetic natures with increasing years. He was, perhaps, secretly rejoiced at the hasty departure of the foreigner. The young gentleman in the slouched beaver and marvellous plaid, had rendered him somewhat distrustful of Nannie's repeated visits to Hawkshill. As to the old house, he observed to David Hurdis, he all but hated it, as having given the death-blow of his poor missus. — "Better that the whole lot should pass away altogether!"

Jakes Zelters, meanwhile, who had come down to preside over the removal from the premises of the pictures, tapestry, and antique delf, tacitly applauded his philosophy. Even to him, no motive had been assigned by young Hildyard for his rejection of a purchase so advantageous. But though grieved by the vexatious origin of the alienation of the property, he was not sorry to be spared all further trouble with the agency. He was old, and he was rich; and no stipend could repay him for the annoyance of periodically quitting his business and his villa at Stockwell, to squabble with Scotch bailiffs and Lancashire farmers, audit incomprehensible accounts, and contract severe fits of rheumatism in the antiquated ghost-hole. When the mildewed ancestors turned their

faces towards the Hague, and the Lanvilles towards the Ardennes, he felt greatly relieved.

His farewell to his ward at Gridlands was all but paternal.

"God be with you, my child," said he. "Your old friend will return hither no more. But should he survive your father, Nannie, look upon him as a parent. Till then, my good girl, do your duty by the author of your days. In my country originated — and I am proud of it — the 'Law of the Stork.' At some future time, since neither of you seems inclined to hear of it at present, may a happy marriage with your cousin fulfil the hopes and expectations of those whose fine fortune you inherit."

From him, too, she learned that Lucas van der Helde had consented to extricate his son from the difficulties into which he had so gratuitously and disgracefully plunged himself, on condition of his becoming, in fact as well as name, a Dutchman; renouncing Brussels and Paris, and investing that portion of the purchase-money of Hawkshill, left unabsorbed by lordly birds of prey, in some industrial undertaking, to which he might contribute his superintendence as well as his capital. The King of the Netherlands was just then setting the example of such speculations. The furnaces of Séraing were blazing under royal authority; and the old Dutchman decreed, on the score of his liberal concession, that the expected heir of his house should be born on the brink of a canal,

and his only son devote his leisure and faculties to more lucrative arithmetic than that of the betting-book.

The Hildyards returned no more to Gridlands. There was every pretext for absenting themselves, for Dorthy was now too infirm for so long a journey; and when the news reached her of the demolition of Hawkshill, it was as if the Neapolitans were suddenly to learn that Vesuvius had sunk into the earth. Elisha continued to address to his cousin, at regular intervals, tidings of his own welfare, and the health of his mother; but the intervals were *too* regular to admit of his letters being other than formal communications. He was evidently fulfilling a duty. The warmer impulses of his heart had subsided.

Michael Balfour felt too conscious that the continuance of his household happiness depended on his daughter's sojourn under his roof, to make very pertinacious inquiries into her intentions as regarded his nephew. The only persons at Middledale who, in any degree, surmised the truth, were neighbour Varnham, now fast wasting away into the grave; and the good pastor, whose attentions to her were, through good and evil report, unintermitting as ever.

But David too well understood the nature of his young parishioner, to molest her by vexatious questions. He saw that, humbled and unhappy, the sense of duty was still paramount in her mind; that she was struggling back, if not into the right way, at least out of the wrong.

Still, it was not for one whose vocation was to instruct and exhort, not occasionally to drop good seed, as if inadvertently, by the wayside, which, he trusted, might fructify in her soul. During the long summer evenings, he more than once joined the young girl in her saunter beside the beck, — where, the preceding year, she had wandered with Maurice by her side, watching together the evening star become gradually apparent, and at length lustrous, amidst the gathering shades of evening; and listening to his wild assertions, that even so *he* should emerge from obscurity, and become a shining light. And never did David leave unimproved these occasions to congratulate her, that the evil genius of Hawyer's Cottage had been so providentially removed from Middle-dale.

"Our poor sick neighbour is sinking apace, Nannie," said he, one day towards the close of autumn. "I doubt whether she'll wear through the winter. 'Twas a thoughtful kindness of your father to send her a supply of the old wine he purchased out of the Hawkshill cellar."

"Dr. Moss informed us that she required stimulants. The Hawkshill Madeira was said to be half a century old. My poor mother accounted it an infallible cordial."

"If it weren't for Gridlands, Nannie, I'm afraid even the staff of life might be lacking to our poor neighbour, as well as its luxuries. Edith told me t'other day, at Ilsin'ton, that since her son's departure, her needle-work had been scarce worth the selling. Her eyesight

is failing her. Weeping, may be, and watching! Sleepless nights and scalding tears are no salve to the eyeball."

"No fear, however, of neighbour Varnham's ever coming to want," answered Miss Balfour, endeavouring to speak cheerfully. "Tell Mrs. Rawson, when you see her again, to give herself no trouble about disposing of the work. I will supply you with money to be transmitted by her, as if it were the produce of the sale."

"To spare her feelings, eh? Ay, thus we go on, Nannie, ministering to the pride of others, and to our own, from year to year — from life's end to life's end, — creating fair surfaces, under which we deceive ourselves into the belief that vessels of clay are vessels of gold and silver. Why should that indigent woman disdain the charity of her neighbours? Why should we administer to her false pride?"

"We are not fair judges, dear Parson Hurdis," rejoined Nannie. "*We* have not been pampered into pride. *We* were not born in the Purple Chamber!"

"And how know you, lass, that it was otherwise with this poor recluse?"

"What *she* has never asserted, I have no right to proclaim."

"You were told so, probably, by that self-seeking son of hers, who, had he done his duty by her, would have abided at Middledale to close her eyes, instead of bewildering her brain and his own by chimerical schemes

of shaking the pagoda-tree for golden fruit which it has long ceased to yield," exclaimed the Pairson. — "Had he really loved the mother who so adores him, Nannie, he would have stayed and worked for her; ay, even as a quarryman, or hind, rather than leave her to the charity of strangers."

His companion listened in indignant silence. — It was not for *her* to become the advocate of Maurice.

"But so it is ever with these Catholics!" pursued the prejudiced Pairson. — "The mother that bore them, the child of their loins, is less to them than their church or their priest. If that young Jesuit were to achieve the fortune he pretends to, he would be making ostentatious endowments to St. Gideon's College, long ere he remembered the poor cottage at Middledale."

"I will not plead his cause," said Nannie, mildly, "because I know that my dear old friend has prejudged it. — But let me instance to you, by another example, that towards the Catholics you are grievously unjust. — You have heard, I know, under what circumstances Lord Mardyke acquired the domain of Hawkshill; that, having won more money at Doncaster of the younger Van der Helde than he was able to pay, the elder one made a sacrifice of the property to liquidate the debt."

"But the Van der Heldes are Calvinists, Nannie. — How do *they* afford a case in point?"

"The Lanvilles are rigid Catholics; and Count Léonce, as deeply implicated as his brother-in-law in that miser-

able affair, would have been ruined, but that his sister generously made over to him the whole of her fortune, leaving herself only a sufficient dowry to become a professed nun."

"That fine young girl, whom I saw riding so merrily about the country scarce two years ago, a professed nun?" exclaimed the Pastor.

"In order to redeem the family honour, and re-establish her imprudent brother." —

"Iniquitous — scandalous — blasphemous!" exclaimed David Hurdis, stopping short, and striking his stout walking-stick into the turf. — "Do these people consider themselves entitled to traffic and chaffer with their Maker? — to assume His livery, as the only badge of poverty that does not degrade them from their order? — If this girl — I mean this noble young lady — was desirous of surrendering her fortune for the benefit of her only brother, why not devote herself to a simple mode of life, and humbly dedicate her days to good works, (as many of our Protestant ladies have done,) without shutting herself up in a convent, merely that eyes profane might not pry into her ceremonious devotions, or espy her garments of serge?"

"To every country — every creed — be its habits and institutions," replied Nannie. "My friend, Eugénie, is happy in the belief of her duty fulfilled, and her salvation accomplished. And surely, if self-abnegation —"

“Nannie, my dear child,” interrupted the venerable Pastor, taking her hands firmly between his own, — “deceive not yourself by dictionary words. — My poor daughter, slaving for her husband and ten children in Ilsin’ton Market-place, is far more self-denying than your lazy nun, mechanically rehearsing her canticles, and beating her breast, with cries of ‘*mea culpa*.’”

Nannie would not join in a contest of opinion with one whose grey hairs and pastoral authority over her, entitled him to her utmost deference. But it did not alienate her a jot the more from Maurice Varnham, or diminish her affectionate admiration of the sacrifice of Eugénie de Lanville, that they worshipped God before another altar than her own.

All that he had asserted, however, and all that she soon afterwards learned from Dr. Moss concerning the condition of Mrs. Varnham, saddened her with the certainty that her long-suffering friend was going hence to be no more seen.

Her own observations fully confirmed the decree. There was a yearning glance in the eyes of the cripple, when she bade her good-bye, every night, which only too plainly indicated how she longed to retain her by her side. But Nannie dared not propose to stay. Her father, with the fretfulness of increasing years, had more than once taxed her with considering Hawyer’s Cottage far more her home than Gridlands.

Still, though their hearts were so close together,

there was an unrecognised gulf between them. As little as ever did neighbour Varnham recur to the past; as little as ever confide to her young consolatress the exact appointment occupied by her son — his future prospects — his present abode. — Gladly, setting all personal feelings apart, would Nannie have addressed to him tidings of his mother's precarious condition, which Mrs. Varnham's apprehension of giving him pain probably induced her to withhold. But Nannie knew not where to address him. — "India" is a wide word. — She was even uncertain in which of the Presidencies his destinies were appointed.

Nannie at length resolved to take courage, and inquire definitely of the sick woman all that it so much imported her to know; when, lo! one night, a bitter night in January, when the beck was congealed in its bed, and the sleet rattled like a shower of arrows against the shutters of Gridlands, while the wind howled in the wide chimney as though an enemy were at hand, Nannie was summoned by a lad dispatched to her by David Hurdis, to the bedside of the dying woman.

Though her very breathing, as she met the external air, was almost suspended by intense cold, she instantly hurried back with him to Hawyer's Cottage; and the anxious and dilated eyes of the cripple, and the glazed look of her cheeks and brow, convinced poor Nannie at once that her last moments were at hand.

A powerful vapour of ether pervaded the room; and

by her bedside sat the grey-haired pastor, unable to restrain his tears; yet so venerable in his simplicity of Christian commiseration, that the most gorgeous robes of the Catholic church could not have added a particle to his dignity. "Thy sins be forgiven thee!" conveyed, from *his* simple lips, an almost apostolic benediction.

Aware that between Nannie and his penitent there existed a heart in heart confidence, as between mother and daughter, he rose to depart when Miss Balfour placed herself on her knees beside the couch of the sufferer.

"Till to-morrow!" said he, wringing the slender fingers of Mrs. Varnham, already moist with the dews of death. But he knew that the only morrow likely to dawn for her, was the great day of eternity.

"My child, my Nannie," faltered the sick woman, collecting all her strength to fold her within her feeble arms, the moment David Hurdis, having enveloped himself in his rough cloak, slowly quitted the room. "I should have spoken to you before, — I should have told you long ago, that we were about to part. But you have undergone so many cares! I did not wish to see your young face again darkened by a cloud!"

The only solicitude of Miss Balfour, at that moment, was how best to assuage the throes convulsing the infirm frame of her friend. Drops of anguish falling from the brow of the dying woman, attested the torture which her fortitude would fain have concealed.

"I have scarcely strength to thank you — scarcely

breath to talk to you. But I must no longer delay," she faltered. "My moments are numbered, Nannie, — my child, my darling — and it is to you I must confide my last instructions to my son. Some time since, I wrote to recal him to England; because, when I am gone, there will be no further obstacle to his sojourn in the land of his fathers. But when he comes back, those by whom his destiny is controlled, will never deal candidly with him. It is not in their nature, — it is not in their faith. You, Nannie, whom he loves like his own soul, must be my messenger to Maurice."

"I will conscientiously discharge any duty with which you may entrust me," said the sobbing girl. "But remember that we are no longer together as we have been. My word may not suffice to Maurice. Let me bring you a pencil and paper. Write what you would say."

"That has been already provided for," murmured the sufferer. "Take away with you to-night, Nannie, yonder casket, of which the key lies on my pillow; the second time, dear child, that I have confided it to your hand. It contains a letter — a letter of explanation — addressed to my son, in intervals of distracting sorrow, distracting pain. Give it into no other hand than his. Maurice must read it in your presence. Till he has thoroughly perused it, Nannie, if you love me, pledge not yourself to become his wife!"

"He will never ask me," murmured Miss Balfour. "He told me when we last parted, that —"

"Mere ravings of a lover's fretful jealousy! He loves you better than his life. His first movement on landing in England, will be to hasten to your feet. Let his next be to peruse the dying wishes of his unhappy mother."

They were interrupted by Dinah, with a restorative only too much needed by her patient. But the power of articulation scarcely remained.

"Farewell, my daughter," were the last intelligible words uttered by the cripple. "Farewell! Grieve not for the death of one whose life has been one of bitterness and sorrow. Oh! that in a world whose best solace is the interchange of human affection, we should deal so hardly by each other — so hardly — so —"

The sobs of those who watched by her bedside were anxiously suspended, in order that not one whisper of that expiring voice should be lost.

"Make him happy!" was all that Nannie could distinctly hear, as she bent over Mrs. Varnham's wasted form. "When we meet again, Nannie, I shall demand at your hands an account of the well-doing of my son!" —

CHAPTER XXI.

FIVE days afterwards, the snow lay deep on a new-made grave in Middledale churchyard. Small matter of interest was it to the drudges of the hard-working hamlet, whether the poor cripple were lying on her couch in Hawyer's Cottage, or in her bed of clay. The utmost notice taken of her departure was by a remark that her death would be a great riddance for the Balfours; that the poor, useless, lame woman must have hung tedious heavy on their hands; and that Dinah Slade would now be wanting a service.

But to Nannie, what a loss! Everybody — everything — seemed to be deserting her. To the death of her kind mother, had succeeded the gain and loss of those new friends, whose brief sojourn in England had cost them so dear. Maurice had thrown her off; — cousin Ely, her playmate, — her other self, — was thoroughly estranged. And now, the gentle spirit which had so incorporated itself with her daily life, and been to her as a guardian angel, was gone to its rest!

How chilling was the thought, amid that dreary winter weather! The north wind wailing through the leafless lime branches, seemed like the requiem of the dead. Nannie had been too much shaken by that death-

bed parting, to be aware of what had immediately ensued. But by degrees, she learned that David Hurdis, at his last interview with the deceased, had received instructions to apprise the Liverpool attorneys of her decease, who would provide for her interment.

And provide they did. The partner who had spoken so harshly of her to the Rawsons, made his appearance, to see that she was buried in the cheapest and humblest manner. On his first arrival, he had signified his intention that, in her son's absence from England, Mrs. Varnham's effects should be sold. But when his attention was called to the worthlessness of the few poor articles of furniture belonging to her, — to the meanness of her threadbare apparel, — to the all but destitution in which her latter days had worn away, — even *he* appeared shocked and distressed.

"But was this all? Had she no valuables — no hoarded trinkets?"

"Nothing! Not a lock and key in the cottage. She had subsisted chiefly on the labour of her hands, partly on charity."

"Then he will be appeased!" burst involuntarily from the lips of the man of the law. And the faithful attendant of the dead was empowered to take possession of her pauperlike inheritance. David had truly said that there was not sufficient to repay the sale.

At his daughter's request, Michael Balfour readily

consented that Dinah should, for the present, retain possession of Hawyer's Cottage.

If, as she informed him, Maurice was about to return, the poor lad would be glad to find wherewithal to lay his head. It would be a comfort in his trouble, to find that nothing was altered in his old home.

It was not often, now, that the old farmer spoke so much to the purpose. It counted among the many distresses of Nannie, that her father's faculties were manifestly failing. — It was not to be wondered at. — Michael had far exceeded the allotted years of man, as was more than once observed to his daughter by old Martha, in confiding to her that the hinds had a hard matter to follow the contradictory orders of their old master, and that it behoved her to take upon herself the management of the farm.

But for worlds would not Nannie have issued or controverted a single order, so as to excite his suspicions of his own infirmity. They were above the world. What mattered the gain or loss of a few pounds, so that the old man retained his sense of authority, and sat in his arm-chair by the fireside, unconscious that the things of this world were crumbling from his hold?

The point that chiefly grieved her in his growing weakness, was his jealousy of the hours she still unwittingly devoted to Hawyer's Cottage. He could not bear her to be out of his sight. The nipping weather confined him to the fireside. Yet he often missed her

when he wanted John Rawson's weekly newspaper read to him for the second or third time, or his pipe replenished, or to be told, over and over again, what dinner was preparing for him.

At such moments, Nannie was often seated in the old arm-chair at Hawyer's, wrapped in her cloak, and gazing vacantly upon the cheerless hearth, where she would never consent to Dinah's lighting a fire for her use; — dreaming of the past, dreaming of the future, — counting, by those strange computations suggested by the heart rather than the head, how many months, how many weeks, how many days, must elapse, ere Maurice received the summons of his mother, and returned to his deserted home.

And how often were those calculations discredited! How often did a messenger arrive from Gridlands, apprising Miss Balfour that her father wanted her, that all was going wrong at home: yet no news of Maurice! Not a line addressed to his mother; and no intimation that he was aware of his bereavement.

That letter — packet, rather than letter — bequeathed to her by the dead, had been again and again examined by the poor girl, on whose heart and conscience the deposit lay heavy as lead. When the first breath of spring brought forth the tender, shell-like leaflets of the old lime-trees, she began to ask herself whether, if Maurice rejected his mother's appeal, and adhered to his new career, it was not her duty to remit to him at once Mrs.

Varnham's last wishes. But again, how was this to be done? She had no clue to his address; and it would be sacrilege to entrust so sacred a deposit to any but the surest method of communication. Besides, his mother had expressly conditioned that *she* was to be present when he opened the packet.

She armed her courage, therefore, to wait: — to *wait!* — one of the most trying ordeals of human philosophy. — Alas! how many precious years of our life are squandered in waiting; waiting for those who come not, — waiting for letters, — waiting for the fulfilment of engagements, — waiting for the restoration of health, — waiting for the fruition of hopes, for the maturity of our children, the reconciliation of estranged friends, the reforms of public life, the alliances of private! — Regardless of the sunshine of Heaven, the breath of May, the rainbow in the sky, waiting, still *waiting*; waiting, while the wood is seasoning for our coffin, and the woollen weaving for our shroud! —

Summer came and waned. Buds formed themselves amid the foliage of the rose-trees of Gridlands, — expanded, blossomed, shed their leaves: — but no Maurice. No letters arrived. He had, perhaps, received information from Messrs. Macglashan and Thorp of the death of his mother.

Overland mails had not at that epoch overmastered all obstacles of time or space: one of those precious boons which the world has accepted with its usual grudging

ingratitude. The communication between England and India was still an affair of months, instead of weeks; and all she could do was to meet with patience the fretful questions of the old farmer, whose lack-lustre eye and incessant prattle afforded sad companionship for her anxieties.

"These trials will be accounted unto thee, my poor child," whispered David Hurdis, when, one day, just as she had espied the first autumnal tint on the old lime-trees and the first brown shrivelled leaf lying at her feet — he found her in tears. — "Be not dismayed, Nannie. Days of duty, child, have a sunshine of their own. No created mortal can foresee or frame his destinies. *My* crust has been often hard, my draught scanty; and I have been tempted to rebel against the Giver. But now that my life is at its close, I recognise only the mercies dispensed to me. On retrospection, I would not exchange this rough frock for cope or stole. So few have been my temptations to evil, so close my fellowship with my brethren, that God and my neighbour have been anigh me, and easy to serve. Nannie, lass — cheer up! — Many a great lady out yon, in what is called the world, would be content to change her lot with one so calm and innocent as thine."

Between the philosophy of eighty and eighteen, there is a chasm not easy to bridge over; but the lessons of her homely teacher served at least to stimulate the courage of the desponding girl. She strove to exert herself.

She endeavoured to make her doting father's comfort the sole object of her life, and to find worthy objects in the village to share the time and charity so long devoted to Hawyer's Cottage. She even attempted to resume the studies of her interrupted education. But *that* was beyond her power. Impossible to pin down her attention to grammars and lexicons, with such urgent reminiscences, such earnest hopes, still stirring in her soul.

Twice, since the departure of her foreign friends from Hawkshill, had letters reached her from Clémence. — The first announced the birth of a son, who seemed to have at once possessed himself of her whole affections; for she spoke of her sister's taking the veil as a "judicious family arrangement," not as the event which deprived her for ever of the beloved companion of her childhood. The second, at the close of Eugénie's novitiate, stated that the happy results of that event were now perfected, by the marriage of their dear Léonce with the wealthy and beautiful daughter of the Prince de Courtrai; nor could even the simple-hearted Nannie help surmising that the triumphant tone in which this lofty alliance was narrated, purported to rebuke the *petite paysanne's* presumption in declining the hand of one whose knightly ancestor was the companion-in-arms, at Acre, of Richard Cœur de Lion.

With Eugénie herself, all hope of intercourse was at an end. Eugénie was, in truth, Eugénie no longer; and

Sœur Véronique of the Sacré Cœur, must not endanger her soul's salvation by correspondence with a heretic.

The lot of that young and happy being whom chance had brought into such familiar intercourse with her thoughts and feelings, thus prematurely cut off from the joys of life, was far more appalling to Nannie than that of the gentle friend over whose head the grass and daisies were growing.

She had often heard Maurice enlarge with enthusiasm upon the peace of a conventual life. Sœur Véronique herself, before her vocation was forced upon her, had described the solitary cells and quiet corridors, of Jette, as far more congenial to her taste than the brilliant *salons* of the Hôtel de Lanville, or the tumultuous gaieties of the court. But the heart of the young girl, accustomed only to the spectacle of domestic love that sweetens the hardest fare and brightens the humblest cottage, spoke a very different language. There is, moreover, in English nature an intuitive aspiration after freedom, to which the very *clôture* is abhorrent. The "grate" presented to the imagination of the *petite paysanne* the horrors of a prison. And over these things she pondered and pondered, till the exercise of her reflective powers almost supplied the place of experience in enlarging and fortifying her mind.

In all that remained wanting to her of knowledge of the world, what a gain to the recluse! Why prematurely acquire that fatal insight into social abuses which de-

prives the present of its charm, and overclouds the future? What would it have availed to Nannie Balfour of Gridlands, to know that the Age she lived in, if schooled out of the arrogant pomp of Dives, exhibited only the fictitious prosperity of Lazarus, having his sores concealed under a specious mantle; that, if less brutal than our forefathers, it is because the cunning of civilisation has enabled us to varnish over our evil propensities; that those who confide in the surface of things, entrust their safety, like the Neapolitans, to a crust of ashes under which the glowing lava is still waiting to engulf them.

Better that she should still watch on, waiting the return of him she was never to see again; wiping the tears of dotage from the eyes of her father; or even puzzling over the bewilderment of German declinations. Farsighted philosophy, by straining the optic nerve, destroys our just appreciation of the objects nearest to us; — the ripple on the adjacent brook — the pencilling of the wild-flower at our feet. —

Meanwhile, time glided past, silent and unobserved, like the flowing of a stream. An unincidental life is proverbially the speediest in its lapse; and a long voyage, so tedious in apprehension, is looked back upon as a day. "To rock the cradle of declining age" is an occupation as productive of calm to the active agent, as to the slumberer; and though two whole years elapsed after the death of Mrs. Varnham, before her aged benefactor

of Gridlands was laid beside her in the Middledale graveyard, it seemed to Nannie, in the retrospect, as though the one had scarcely survived the other.

Of Elisha, for the last twelve months, she had heard less and less. At intervals, formal letters, but oftener large packets of books, reached her from her cousin; books selected no longer by the lover, but by the preceptor. Fiction had given way to fact; poetry to histories, memoirs, travels. Now that his health was established, his mind seemed to have attained a more vigorous texture.

When summoned by Nannie to Gridlands, to assist in laying his uncle's head in the grave, he declined the journey. But it was on a plea which she was obliged to recognise as valid. His mother's life hung upon a thread. He did not dare to leave her.

Another friend, to whom she had written to solicit the same mark of respect, had been forced to excuse himself on grounds of a similar nature. Jakes Zelters was now a fixture in his arm-chair, at Stockwell. But, conscious that his presence was due to the representative of old Madam Verhout and her highly-esteemed bailiff, he dispatched in his place the son who also represented him in his compting-house in the Barbican. But, alas! the Dutch delegate made his appearance at Gridlands, on the day of the funeral, armed with a desk full of parchments, leases, and account-books, twice the size of his carpet bag; the very aspect of which might

have affected the most iron-headed conveyancer going with a fit of the megrims, and was far from calculated to raise the depressed spirits of Miss Balfour.

As Wilhem Zelters (who wrote himself junior, though on the verge of fifty) was a sober, solemn widower, keenly alive to the value of the securities under his charge, it is possible that Nannie's forethoughted old guardian may not have been wholly disinterested in his choice of a representative. But if so, he reckoned without his hostess; nor, when the new man of business discovered her appalling ignorance of business, insensibility to her interests, and prodigality to the point of refusing to let the messuage of Gridlands, from which she already announced her intention of absenting herself till the attainment of her majority, would he have accepted for wife a woman, however opulent, so manifestly unworthy the Dutch blood stagnating in her veins.

In so decided a favourite of fortune as Nannie Balfour, covetousness, however, would have been a crime. While so many of her fellow-creatures were struggling for the necessaries of life, some toiling by the sweat of their brows, some, of their brains, Providence was heaping up ingots around her. Those who preceded her, appeared to have lived and laboured, only that their self-sacrificing frugality might provide her with luxuries. At the death of Michael Balfour, it appeared that his savings invested in the Ilseington Bank, amounted to a larger sum than Zelters and Son already held in trust

for his daughter. The *petite paysanne* was in actual possession of twelve hundred a year!

But that Middledale had become too narrow a sphere for her aspirations, was by no means the result of this discovery. Had she been to work for her bread, Nannie would still have expatriated herself. Not because she had heard the simple Dalesfolk scouted by Maurice as miserable boors; not because from Eugénie and Clémence she had obtained an insight into the refinements of civilised life; but because *there* she had both suffered and inflicted pain; because *there* she had alienated from herself her childhood's gentle friend; because *there* she had been rejected by Maurice; because *there*, for two long years, she had watched and wept for his return.

Still, though resolved upon departure, when the time arrived for bidding adieu to the old homestead with its lime-trees, the spreading moors with their gorgeous purple carpeting, the green hill-sides where her flocks were quietly cropping their meagre pasture, — above all, that sacred grave-yard, whose very silence spoke audibly to her heart, — she felt that she was severing herself from the better part of her existence. Applying to herself the words of Tasso's hermit to Erminia,

D'ogni oltraggio e scorno
La mia famiglia e la mia greggia illese,
Sempre qui fur, nè strepito di Marte
Ancor turbò questa remota parte,

she seemed to foresee that in the wide world of the

continent to which she was hastening, many outrages, many scorns might await her.

Previous to quitting England, she was to spend a month with the Zelters family, that she might judge for herself of the elderly duenna whom, at her desire, they had provided for their ward; and in the interim, she resolved on making a strenuous effort to obtain some insight into the destinies of Maurice. If evil had betided him, better to know the worst. If good, and he wilfully abstained from communication with Middledale, it seemed her duty to apprise him of his mother's bequest.

But to her application to Messrs. Macglashan and Thorp, the coldest possible reply was accorded. — "It was not the wish of the young gentleman's surviving relatives," they wrote, "that he should maintain any further communication with the friends of the unfortunate woman who had been so providentially removed."

Nannie's first impulse was to write a second time, and inform these churlish people that she had a sacred duty to perform, by delivering to Maurice Varnham a death-bed bequest from his mother. Second thoughts reminded her that they would probably attribute *real* value to the contents of the packet, and demand its cession. Better, therefore, to wait, and, if possible, obtain intelligence from other quarters. Rather anything than prove faithless to the trust she had so solemnly undertaken.

CHAPTER XXII.

So unfamiliar was the farmer's daughter with the luxuries and refinements of life, that she may be forgiven for passively assenting to old Jakes Zelters's daily vaunt, that Greenhill Lodge, his Stockwell villa, was a paradise on earth. He had endeavoured to make it so, after the Batavian fashion, by costly floriculture. It was the old man's only pleasure, only prodigality; and Nannie, introduced for the first time to stove-plants and exotics, felt as if a page of choice poetry lay developed before her.

She could scarcely understand how the nature of Wilhem Zelters remained so dull and dry, with such exquisite flowers diffusing their fragrance through the conservatory opening into the drawing-room of Greenhill Lodge. The priggish head-gardener, whose pride it was to carry away golden medals at every flower-show in the suburbs, could not repress a supercilious smile at her enthusiasm. The fuchsias which her inexperience selected as the most beautiful, had, he said, "been three years out, and were not worth speaking of."

The deep mourning worn for her father prevented, of course, anything like festivity in the house; or Nannie's first introduction to London society might have

afforded her singular impressions. But two of her guardian's married daughters were invited to stay with him during her visit; the elder of whom, Cordelia, married to a rich banker, was a soft-looking, soft-minded, unmeaning dame, all simper and good will towards any one even remotely connected with the rich Van der Helde of the Hague; the other, Mrs. Brent, a clever, handsome, eccentric woman, unconscious or indifferent that she differed in any respect from other people. Her husband was a K.C. of the highest eminence; too much occupied with his business to take much heed of her oddities or the censures to which they exposed herself and him.

For, in those days, eccentricity amounted to an all but statutable offence. It was the last year of the reign of the last George; that crowned fribble, who, had he been born two centuries before, a Stuart instead of a Guelph, would have united the despotism of our first Charles with the licentiousness of the second.

Tyrannic in trifles, he had pummiced down the surface of his court to such polished brilliancy, that the slightest divergence from conventional rule became a deformity. A man who dressed or spoke, or even looked, otherwise than in accordance with the rubric as by Pavilion established, was a condemned heretic. "Such men were dangerous!" — Such men must not pretend to rise in church or state. There was a "king's pattern" for bishops, as well as for tea-spoons.

It is a vulgar error to fancy that the influence of the court reaches no further than the yeomen of the guard at the palace gate. As a pebble thrown into a mill-pond ruffles in concentric circles the full expanse, even such obscure spots as a villa at Stockwell exhibit a weakened reflection of the follies paramount in the high places of the land. Mont Blanc is visible at sixty miles' distance; and the meretricious displays of Carlton House were emulated to the uttermost limits of our lord-loving island. Let us, however, keep the secret from our grandchildren; for the inventions of that tasteless time have happily left no permanent trace. The rubbish has been shot, and built over. Like other stage decorations, the royal Carlton and royal Cottage have disappeared; and

Dome-capt towers and stucco palaces,
Left not a wreck behind!

Popular adulation, however, though general, is not universal. There is negative as well as positive attraction; and for every hundred courtiers, there will always be a *frondeur* or two, whose turbulence is not to be silenced. By degrees, the deaf begin to hear, the blind to see. The word "Reform" was already shaped by the lips of millions of murmurers.

Mrs. Brent, the daughter of Mr. Zelters, deputed to do the honours of Greenhill to Miss Balfour, was, in her degree, a thoroughly independent member of society; and as she said everything that came into her head, and

wore whatever came to hand, it was fortunate that considerable beauty of person, and powers of mind, covered a multitude of sins of taste. Her young guest, indeed, unversed in the etiquettes of society, was less startled than people of the world were apt to be, at her unvarnished assertions and daring costumes. But even Nannie could not help feeling that, if such were the tone and fashions of London ladies, Clémence and poor Eugénie de Lanville were far pleasanter specimens of her sex.

After a day or two, however, she grew to like her, as people acquire a taste for olives or caviare. Her outspoken truths were more palatable, in the long run, than the smiling platitudes of Cordelia Whittingham; who, having obtained some knowledge of West-End fripperies from a ladyship who had condescended to marry a junior partner in the Lombard Street firm of which her husband was the head, was a little too apt to prattle about Shakespeare and the musical glasses.

"Why are you going abroad, little girl?" inquired Mrs. Brent, abruptly, of Nannie, one evening, as they were standing together in the conservatory, watching the opening of a night-flowering *Cereus*. "Better remain in England, marry, and live (as people do in story-books) very happy ever after. — Not my brother Wilhem — as my father, I suspect, would have you. But a man of sense and spirit, with strength of lungs to resist our national atmosphere, and strength of mind to overcome our national creepmouseishness."

"There may come a time for that hereafter," replied the "little girl," thus unceremoniously addressed, — rejoiced that there was no auditor of this strange attack.

"Never!" cried Mrs. Brent, with an emphatic shake of the head. "You are young and rich. Once experience the freedom of single blessedness under such advantages, and you will be in no hurry to place your neck in any man's collar, or your purse in any man's pocket. To obey bit and bridle, a mare should be broke in her foalhood."

"I am in no haste to resign the enjoyment of a will of my own," persisted Nannie, a little abashed.

"Well, don't try the system too long. You'll find wilfulness as hard to leave off as opium-eating or betel-chewing. And how are you ever to acclimatise yourself in chilly England — above all, in smoky London — after sunning yourself for years in the sweet South?"

"A winter in Italy can surely do me no great harm? Two years hence, I am to return to England. Mr. Zelters wishes me to be on the spot, to wind up his guardianship account."

"Two years!" exclaimed Mrs. Brent, taking her abruptly by the arm. "Sojourn only six months, my dear child, in any foreign country, and you will never again find courage for the high-pressure formality of Great British society; where a man may not uplift his eyebrow, or a woman her little finger, except in conformity with what is called public opinion. Don't risk

it, little girl! If you are ever to become a homely English matron, carve your own mutton, pay your own weekly bills, and catechize your own Sunday-school; don't wander out of the pale of roast-beef, plum-pudding, Watts's hymns, and God save the King. I, who know that, betide what may, my household gods must still be set up in Russell Square and my boys educated at Rugby, dare not allow myself so much as the luxury of opening a French book, or skimming the *Débats*. I have even interdicted Juliennes and soufflés in my bills of fare, as generative of unbecoming levity; and diet myself on sea-biscuits, brown stout, and Political Economy, in order to be a suitable wife to my excellent but matter-of-fact husband, and a fit companion for his associates."

Nannie, though somewhat mystified by the irony of her new acquaintance, could not refrain from a smile. But Mrs. Brent looked so superlatively handsome, as she said all this, with her dark braids, and Grecian features lighted up by whimsicality, that she was not inclined to analyse too curiously the meaning of her paradoxes.

"However," resumed the strong-minded woman, perceiving that Miss Balfour was indisposed to reply, "we are all taxed according to our means, except by the king's exchequer. The life I lead is suited to my nature. My sister Cordelia and her banker-husband live among fine folks in May Fair, aping the great world at third-hand, and not daring to be either merry or wise, because fun and wisdom are out of fashion; and not a word is

uttered in their gaudy drawing-room which is worth hearing or remembering. If one of the Whittingham visitors found himself on the verge of a clever remark, he would desist from the rash act, lest he should pass for bookish and pedantic. In Cordelia's set, your thoughts and gowns must be of the most flimsy materials, lest you should be suspected of vulgar economy, and wanting to turn them to account.

"Mrs. Whittingham appears to be very happy," pleaded Nannie, who had been wistfully watching the full-blown Cordelia's incessant smiles.

"She *is* very happy. My sister possesses a sweet temper, a good digestion, easy circumstances, and a total want of sensibility, — sterling elements of human happiness. *I am not* good-tempered. But that I am fortunately yoked with a man my superior in intellect by a hundred thousand cubits, I should have turned out a Xantippe. Had my husband resembled Cordelia's chuckle-headed, tuft-hunting, worse half, for instance, I won't answer for the consequences — Arsenic is cheap, and he would scarcely have lived his natural life out —"

"I would not hear your enemy say so," rejoined Nannie, amazed at her recklessness of speech.

"Luckily, I am surrounded by congenial spirits. No washed-out mincing ladyships, no used-up swindling lords; but plain-spoken, clear-minded, men and women. The eagle must be fed on raw meat, Nannie, as the parrot with almonds. Robert Brent, on his return home for

relaxation after his day's business, would not stand the importunate frivolity of fops and fools; or of silly women, flitting like moths into his face."

"I should have thought that, to unbend his mind after his fatigues, would be a relief."

"Nonsense, little girl! — To unbend, implies artificial tension. — A strong mind cannot unbend. It is like a granite wall; against which, whether you discharge a shuttlecock or a bullet, it still remains a granite wall. Robert Brent is a cheerful man; but he likes rational conversation — vigorous argument. He is not to be badgered out of *his* opinions by club personalities, or trifled out of them by the last bon mot."

"You almost inspire me with awe of Mr. Brent," said Nannie. "Yet he seems so mild and indulgent!"

"The most genuinely excellent of human beings," was the proud rejoinder. — "A man who lives only to confer happiness on all belonging to him."

She was leaning, as she uttered these words, against one of the columns of the conservatory, with her hands crossed behind her, and her head thrown back, in a somewhat masculine attitude. But the spirit that flashed from her fine eyes, as she pronounced this honest panegyric on her mate, redeemed the fault.

"I am getting very prosy," said she, conscious, perhaps, of the effect she was producing; "but when I catch the eye of the speaker, I am apt to lay down the law. Observe, by the way, how English people, in-

dividually and collectively, exude at every pore the influence of our vaunted constitution! Our institutions are sure to exhibit a parliamentary form; our opinions to manifest themselves by ballot. — We have associations, public meetings, and speechifications, for everything and nothing; Abolition of this and Promotion of t'other; — to prevent coster-mongers from drubbing their donkeys, or human brutes their wives; or to send missionaries, to be eaten alive, in the interior of Africa, by pismires or cannibals; or establish polyglot institutions for the confusion of tongues. All these minor parliaments, doubtless, effect *some* good. — If nothing else, they help to polish up, by practice, the periods of tyros; and persuade the manufacturing towns, through newspaper reports, that other places of public amusement are open in London, besides the House of Commons and Exeter Hall."

"Can you inform me," said Nannie, who, during this long and rambling harangue, had been studying within herself in what manner to introduce into the conversation the subject nearest her heart, yet managed to put the question at last in the *non sequitur* style peculiar to young ladies in love; — "can you happen to inform me what is the best mode of obtaining intelligence of a friend in India?"

"In the Company's service? — Civil or military? — In what Presidency?" — inquired the strong-minded woman, coming instantly to the point.

With a deep blush, Nannie avowed her ignorance of all these particulars. It was to ascertain them, in fact, that she required assistance.

"Come with me into my father's library, then," said Mrs. Brent, leading her rapidly through the drawing-room, where the rest of the party were absorbed in the taciturn mysteries of whist. "My father has all sorts of East India Directories, Registers, Reports, and Almanacks. Such is *his* notion of useful knowledge; such the literature he delights in. Like Plato, he has banished poets from his Republic, the better to insure his trust in Cocker's Arithmetic and Blue Books."

Red books, meanwhile, without end, were taken down and placed before Nannie, "published by authority of the H. E. I. C." — But she turned over the pages hopelessly, as we do those of the dictionary of some unknown tongue.

"What is the name you wish to find?" enquired Mrs. Brent, desirous to assist her. "Probably a Balfour, — and you have long passed the B.s! — But you have got to the very end of the volume; and none but my outlandish family are classed under Z. — Ah! the Vs!" she chattered on. "But I fear you will not find a single Verhout."

Mrs. Brent seemed resolved that the "little girl" should interest herself only in her kith and kin.

But, alas! the name of Varnham was as completely absent from the page as that of Verhout.

"Here is another Register," said Mrs. Brent, perceiving by Miss Balfour's wistful air that she had not obtained the desired information. Again, however, the search was fruitless.

"You must apply to my brother, Wilhem, for assistance," observed Mrs. Brent. "Wilhem is an incomparable truffle dog. Nothing like him for hunting out a name or a fact. Give him, in writing, the indispensable data, and he will be in Leadenhall Street to-morrow; breaking clerks upon the wheel, and putting directors to torture, till he has obtained the fullest particulars."

Nannie, however, demurred. She was unwilling to afford to the Zelters family any clue to the enthralling influence under which she laboured. It was clear, — as clear as print and paper could make it, — that, in the current year, no individual of the name of Varnham was engaged in either the civil or military service of the Honourable East India Company!

The following evening, Mr. Brent, apprised by his wife of Nannie's solicitude, good-naturedly volunteered his services. But his lawyer-like precision was somewhat baffled by the incoherency of her reply. It was only by dexterous cross-examination he managed to extort from her that the young man she desired to trace was named Varnham, the son of a deceased Lancashire neighbour, to whom she was desirous of dispatching a packet entrusted to her charge.

In the course of a few days, he was able to assure her, on the highest authority, that no individual of that name had passed through the preliminary examination essential to an Indian appointment.

While still confused by this perplexing intelligence, she had to reply to further questions on the part of the shrewd lawyer, by whom she was seated at dinner, and for whom her artlessness possessed all the charm of novelty. He had never before seen so much *naïveté* combined with such perfect intelligence.

"And what are you going to do in foreign parts?" he persisted. "Why in such a hurry to desert your country and friends?"

"I have no tie to England. — I am nearly alone in the world," she replied. "My education has been neglected; and it is pleasanter to a grown-up child to acquire knowledge by seeing and hearing, than by hard reading; by hand-books rather than horn-books."

"Well answered! But you may learn more than is good for you. You may be taught more than is even pleasant. Bad accounts reach us just now, Miss Balfour, from the continent. Revolutionary movements are fermenting in all directions; and wars and rumours of wars are harsh hearing for a young lady."

"In case of any popular disturbance, I should take shelter in a convent," replied Nannie. "I have a friend, — I might almost say an only friend — a professed nun in the *Sacré Cœur*."

"A *nun* your bosom friend?" exclaimed Robert Brent, who regarded nuns and monks as about the most useless human lumber encumbering the earth. "I'm sincerely sorry to hear it. — First, you abandon your native country; next, you will, perhaps, abandon its Established Church. And yet you look too sensible and temperate for foolish vacillations. I scarcely ever knew a person change his religion, who was not previously ill at ease in his conscience. An innocent mind is seldom restless. People conscious of frailty betake themselves to the indulgences of the Catholic church, as a sick person has recourse to the nostrums of a quack."

Nannie was silent. She was, perhaps, secretly connecting the change of faith of poor Mrs. Varnham, with the dark hints thrown out by the Liverpool attorney.

"Your nun of the *Sacré Cœur* has put me more out of conceit than ever with your projected journey," resumed Mr. Brent. "If you have, as you assert, no ties to England, it is time you made some. Come and stay with my wife in Russell Square. She will make you happy. Her bark is worse than her bite; and she only barks at vagrants. Or go and visit Cordelia Whittingham, in May Fair. Between both, we will show you something of society, and administer a few of its pleasures. We can't afford to lose you, Miss Balfour; and trust me, you will learn more by association with cultivated men and women, than by staring at Swiss

mountains, or wandering through all the picture galleries of Rome."

Nannie Balfour made no reply. Touched by his almost fatherly remonstrances, tears stood in her eyes. Perhaps the disappointment of her sanguine hope that in London she should obtain authentic intelligence of Maurice, was not without its share in her emotion.

Nothing that he had said, however, — no argument that reached her ears under the roof of Greenhill Lodge, — availed to alter her determination. She was in haste to depart. The fear of being summoned to attend the last moments of aunt Dorthy, and exposed to reproaches concerning her estrangement from her cousin, nay, perhaps, further solicitations on his own part, made her in haste to be gone.

Escorted, therefore, by a courier many years confidentially employed by Zelters and Son, and a companion, highly recommended by them, whose very face was capable of putting to flight a brigade of dragoons, early in the autumn, Miss Balfour took her departure from England.

The world was all before her, where to choose
Her place of rest, and Providence her guide.

But Providence, in its wisdom, does not always select the smoothest path for those whom it desires to instruct in the Lessons of Life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE lady engaged by Zelters and Son as duenna to their ward, had been selected for the office partly in consideration of her personal qualities, and as being conversant with foreign languages and usages; and still more, because, fifteen years before, she had been earnestly recommended to their good offices by the Van der Heldes of the Hague.

Madame Duménil, who had considerably overpassed the limits of a "certain age," had in her youth figured with some distinction at the transitory court of the first king of Holland; her husband, a gallant Colonel, afterwards killed at the battle of Leipsig, being attached to the household of Queen Hortense. During her residence at the Hague, she had recommended herself by many excellent qualities to the friendship of the young mother of Adrian; and, when a premature widowhood left her only a small pension for her subsistence, and shortly afterwards, the fate of Napoleon precipitated into the dust all those who were not adroit, alert, or base enough to make merchandise of their adhesion to the Lilies of the Bourbons, the protection of her former friend had not been wanting.

The name of a "*Veuve d'un Colonel de l'Empire*," has been since as memorably abused by begging-letter impostors and proprietors of Parisian boarding-houses, as, at the commencement of the present century, the name of *émigré* or *ci-devant* by ushers and professors, dancing masters and hairdressers; — each of whom was sure to have been a Marquis or Baron in his own country, previous to the revolution, till confronted with some member of the *Ancienne Noblesse*. But Madame Duménil was the very genuine widow of a very genuine Colonel; in addition to being a well-meaning, kind-hearted woman. She was, the more the pity, a little affected in her manners; and appeared almost too ethereal to have been the bosom friend of a Dutchwoman. But this was a superficial fault. In any real emergency, she forgot to be *maniérée*, and was the best creature in the world. She had not, otherwise, been selected by old Zelters as companion to his ward.

It must have been noticed by any one conversant for the last fifty years with the habits of our volatile neighbours on the other side the channel, that although, after one of their volcanic *coups d'état*, a dynasty subsides out of sight, as through the trapdoors of a pantomime, accompanied by all its partisans and adherents, like the host of Pharaoh overwhelmed by the Red Sea, no sooner is the royal or imperial standard re-established in the land, than up start the vanished legions, like the nuns in Robert le Diable out of their graves. But, till

that spirit-stirring event, the poor half-starved creatures remain interred — no one knows where — like the public monuments buried during the Reign of Terror, by the praise-worthy conservatism of Monsieur Lenoir.

From this species of eclipse, poor Madame Duménil had been rescued by the kind hand of Jakes Zelters, for the purpose of attending upon Nannie. It would have been difficult to say what amount of misery she had undergone; so gaunt were her looks, so humbled were her pretensions; for, while the obese elder branch of the Bourbons weighed down the throne of France, it was as great an offence to pronounce in society the vituperated name of "Bonaparte," as though the great Napoleon had been a convicted felon. Names even collaterally connected with the Empire, were altogether suppressed. The youth of France was instructed to place in ellipse its fifteen years of military glory; and the Empire was passed over as mythical. The cypher of Napoleon was effaced from the public monuments; and the infamous libels of Lewis Goldsmith against the Bonaparte family, were re-translated, re-printed, and re-read.

Poor Madame Duménil was precisely one of those placed under an interdict by these miserable attacks; and, disowned by such of her friends and relations as pretended to the favour of the court, or toleration in society, she was beginning almost to wonder how and why she still existed, when, having appealed to Jakes Zelters to procure her an appointment as governess in

an English family, she had the delight of finding herself solicited to become *dame de compagnie* to a very young English lady of fortune, about to make an extended tour of the Continent.

No time was lost in signifying her grateful acquiescence, and hastening to England for the commencement of her functions.

But when better acquainted with her, Nannie could not help sometimes wondering what, in her intended capacity of governess, she had purposed to teach. For the only accomplishment she was ever known to practise, was the art of twisting a gauze scarf round her neck, after the aërial fashion, now unattainable, exhibited in Isabey's portraits; and twitching a tambouring needle up and down, with about the fiftieth part of the perfection of a Glasgow machine.

During their sojourn together at Greenhill Lodge, however, Nannie readily discovered in her the united charm of a gracious temper, and pleasing voice; endowments the less expected, because a pair of sable eyebrows, and a darkly-shaded upper lip, imparted to her countenance an air of singular ferocity. Nor was the anomaly rendered the less striking by poor Madame Duménil's infatuation for the tender colours, filmy draperies, and sentimental romances, in vogue at the courts of Malmaison and Navarre.

It was no great mortification to Madame Duménil to find that her young charge did not purpose a lengthened

sojourn at Paris, on her road to Italy. Paris had been, and was, a scene of deep humiliation to the Colonel's widow. Nothing remained of her beloved Emperor that could possibly be effaced by the powers that were; — except a ragged portrait or two, hanging frameless in the brokers' shops of the quays; and that noble column, in the Place Vendôme, which the fickle French would fain have sacrificed at the Restoration, with all its national memories of heroism, to propitiate the dynasty they were already endeavouring to undermine and discard. She was glad, too, that Miss Balfour did not compel her to make good the rhapsodies in which she had indulged at Stockwell, concerning a certain villa at Asnières, where the blissful epoch of her life was passed, and which she declared to be twice as Eden-like as Greenhill Lodge. For, never much larger than a rabbit-hutch, it now figured as an *estaminet*, at the sign of "*Le Tapageur*."

The season being already far advanced for the passage of the Rhone, they were to proceed at once to Italy. Rome was selected as their winter quarters. Rome, so often sought as an ark of refuge by those whose pride or affections have suffered from rough contact with the world: — dethroned pretenders — disgraced ministers — baffled intriguers — poets, out of sorts with their critics — or withered beauties, out of sorts with themselves.

The object of Nannie Balfour in making the Papal city her temporary home, was one that she scarcely yet avowed, even to herself. But she was so impatient to

be there, that she experienced less gratification than might have been expected from the noble objects of art, or beautiful sites, which presented themselves in the course of their journey. For the appreciation of the former, indeed, the education of her eye was not sufficiently developed. But to admire the works of nature, every human being is qualified by birthright, through the spark of divine intelligence inherited from the source of all light. It was, therefore, probably, the irritability arising from defeated purposes and disappointed hopes, that incited the young traveller, even amidst the fairest or most imposing landscapes of Italy, still to exclaim, "We are losing time!"

By this constant exhortation to her companions, she managed to arrive before winter set in, at the remote and quiet home already secured for her through the correspondents of Zelter and Co., in the Strada della Longara, within sight of the church of St. Onofrio.

The Rome of fashionable tourists was no object to Nannie. Her deep mourning, her project, her inclinations, demanded the strictest retirement. Had the former alone been consulted, she would have arrived and abode in the Eternal City without the notification of her presence to any human being, beyond the banker to whom her letters of credit were addressed. But Mrs. Whittingham had forced upon her letters of introduction to an English family, who, not having obtained in London the consideration they fancied due to their double name and

double crest, (coupled with the most deplorable personal and moral insignificance), were parading the Continent with their British Legion of sons and daughters; aiming their dull dinner parties at the head of every traveller of note likely to lend them a helping hand up the toilsome ascent of notoriety.

Nannie, at first, declined. A fashionable family, with even a solitary surname and crest, would have been almost too much for her. But Robert Brent, on whose judgment she had implicit reliance, assured her that in her unprotected situation, and in a city destitute of an English diplomatic representative, the countenance of her countrypeople might, in some emergency or other, be indispensable.

"Allow me to recommend to your attention my dear Mrs. Warburton Wast," wrote Mrs. Whittingham, "a *charming* young lady of Scottish extraction my friend Miss Balfour who is about to spend the winter at Rome under the chaperonage of a *distinguished* French woman widow of the late heroic Colonel Duménil any kindness shown to whom the Messrs. Whittingham Lady Mary Whittingham and myself will DEEPLY appreciate. She is a ward of my *dear* father and in possession of a CONSIDERABLE fortune."

This characteristic missive was duly forwarded by Miss Balfour; because she had pledged herself to that

effect to her friends in Russell Square. But by private instructions to Hermann, the old courier, she secured herself against the visits they seemed to solicit. The conventional pretexts of "not at home," or "*pas visible*," were unknown to Nannie; though her bombazine and broad hems afforded, she thought, a sufficient pretext for choosing to be alone. But Mrs. Warburton Wast, who dearly loved to supply new English faces for the admiration of the Monsignori and Purple stockings, with whom it was her pride to crowd her weekly assemblies, was disposed to resent the self-seclusion of one whom she had thought proper to announce, on her own authority, as a beautiful heiress, related to the first families in Scotland. She accordingly dispatched to the "charming young lady of CONSIDERABLE fortune," a card for a formal dinner party, at nearly a month's notice. But Nannie was not to be entrapped; and Mrs. Warburton Wast and her three over-dressed daughters immediately conceived an antipathy to the young stranger, as most impertinently inaccessible, and "probably nobody after all."

Even Madame Duménil, though expressly forewarned that the young person as whose *dame de compagnie* she was to officiate, would lead a life of seclusion, began to think it hard that, in the midst of a city like Rome, and of a season like the Carnival, not a soul was to enter their gate but masters and professors. At Miss Balfour's age, *she* had been three years a wife, and was playing

a brilliant part in the private theatricals and public pageants of Queen Hortense; pastimes, she thought, better suited to the May-day of life, than perpetual study and unmitigated solitude. "If her dear Meess," she wrote home to old Zelters, "so rich and so attractive, were educating herself for a finishing governess, she could not be more devoted to her lessons."

The venerable Netherlander was not the man to object to industry, bodily or intellectual. Nor did he discern a fault in that reverence to a father's memory, which sufficed to alienate his interesting ward from the pleasures of the world. But he was not quite so well pleased to learn that, in addition to the professors of languages and painting to whose lessons Miss Balfour devoted her time, were superadded the instructions of a certain Abbate Bartolomeo, one of the professors at the *Collegio di Propaganda Fide*; a learned Jesuit, who came, ostensibly, to impart archæological and numismatic lore, but by far the larger half of whose lectures was devoted to the exposition of the doctrines of the Catholic church.

It did not much surprise the old merchant. He had often feared that her intimacy with the Lanvilles and the Jesuit-reared son of Mrs. Varnham, would tend to disturb her religious convictions. But it never occurred to a mind far more occupied with his commerce of "dry goods and tobaccoes" than with the morbid sensibility of boys and girls, whom his daughter Brent comprehended under the generic head of green geese, that all the stu-

dies and labours of her whom he coveted as a daughter-in-law, purported only to surprise and delight the said "Jesuit-reared son of Mrs. Varnham," on his return from the East, or wherever else he might be sojourning.

On learning that Miss Balfour seemed likely to enlist under the banners of a church which to *him* were as the ensigns of perdition, he thought it his duty, indeed, to remonstrate. But to that portion of her guardian's letter, Nannie returned no answer. Not because she was of opinion that one whose authority related only to the control of her Dutch bonds and long annuities, ought to restrain his communication within columns ruled in red ink, and headed with £ s. d. But because, her inclinations and opinions being still at variance, she would not do injustice to so true a friend by an inconclusive reply.

The anxieties of Madame Duménil, therefore, remained unabated. Born a year or two previous to the outbreak of the first Revolution, she was by no means *dévoté*. It was not (as she explained to Nannie, as lightly as though discussing a new bonnet) the fashion of her day.

In *her* eyes the tricoloured beaver of the Abbate Bartolomeo was as out of place as that of Don Basile, in Beaumarchais' comedy. That her young charge, born of Protestant parents in a Protestant country, should take it into her head to "*s'enfoncer dans ce vilain monde*

des Jesuites," was "*pire qu'un vice — c'est à dire, un ridicule!*"

Her patroness-protégée did not oppose her opinions — did not even reply to her insinuations; but simply acted on her own right of independence. The Abbate maintained his ground, and continued his theological lessons,

So deep in knowledge, that few lines could sound
Or plumb the bottom of that vast profound;
With nice distinctions glossing o'er the text,
Obscure in meaning, and with words perplex'd,
With subtleties on subtleties refin'd,
Meant to divide and subdivide the mind.

How dangerous for the simple soul of a girl of nineteen.
How different from the apostolic teaching of the good old
Pairson! —

CHAPTER XXIV.

UNDER this complete subversion of her authority, Madame Duménil exhibited such cheerful good humour, that Miss Balfour almost reproached herself for her contumacy. But it was as impossible for her to submit to the government of her frivolous companion, as for the wheel to allow the fly perched upon it, to regulate its movements. Not that Nannie was grown self-conceited. Readily did she put herself to school to those who were qualified to teach. But she had been hitherto fortunate in advisers; in the ghostly wisdom of the good old Pairson — the practical sense of Jakes Zelters — the feminine graces of neighbour Varnham — and the exalted genius of cousin Ely; — and how, after *them*, could she bow to the judgment of a feather-brained Parisian, who, though she excelled in courtly curtseys, and recited an anecdote with piquant tact, not only found this barren world enough for bliss, but found equal delight in its chickweed and its roses.

The superannuated butterfly was nevertheless so gay and harmless, it was so consolatory to a heart wounded like Nannie's yet disposed to conceal its wounds, to find the fluttering wings and meally texture conceal no latent sting, that she endeavoured by every means in her power

to gratify such tastes on the part of Madame Duménil, as did not militate against her own projects of retirement. A *salon* was assigned her, where she might at all times entertain her friends, on condition that the quiet sitting-room of her charge was never invaded.

With one exception, however. A withered little maiden lady, who, after figuring at Paris, in her youth, in the household of the Empress Josephine, had, on the dispersion of the Bonaparte family, found refuge in Rome, as a hanger-on upon the daughters of the Prince de Canino, was occasionally invited to her tea-table. For Mademoiselle St. Martin was poor and neglected; and a gossip with her old friend and playfellow over their palmy days of the Elysée and the Tuileries, was manna in her desert. When not required as a *duenna* in the opera-box, or *souffre douleur* in the airings of Princess G., the occupation of poor old Anatolie was to nurse a dowagerly Pomeranian dog, which had been wheezing for the last five years with a quarter of a lung, in an attic ten feet square, warmed by a chafing-dish; and Miss Balfour was assured by Madame Duménil that it was an act of charity to comfort her poor kinswoman by a good fire, and a cup of *thé de Caravane*.

Amazing how soon, under its influence, the two old ladies grew young again. How they chirruped of fêtes and fashions; of the little squabbles, for precedence, in the early Napoleonic court, where everybody was making believe to be somebody; where the tribe of Beauharnais and the race of La Pagerie looked down on the tribe of

the Bonapartes as ennobled *bourgeois*; and the tribe of Bonaparte looked down upon the more fastidious pretenders who despised them, as *ci-devants* and *creoles*; how, with that aptitude for humiliating and thwarting their fellow-creatures which seems to be the most unradicable of our original sins, every day had produced some pungent retort or biting *bon-mot*, among the fry of human minnows of which Napoleon was the Triton: — stimulating feuds and jealousies almost as harassing to the great man as the management of that gigantic *Chasse aux Rois*, of which Europe was the hunting-ground, and himself the *Grand Veneur*.

While the two volatile old ladies chattered, argued, and recounted the history of the Imperial Court (an edition abridged, of course, for the use of schools — for, to their credit be it spoken, Frenchwomen exhibit scrupulous respect to the ears of girlhood), Miss Balfour sat by and listened, as if they had been two old fairies consulting together, crutch in hand, in a fairytale. They talked, indeed, quite as familiarly of diamonds and pearls as big as hazel-nuts, — of tiny equipages, fanciful costumes, — emperors, kings, princes, dukes, counts, barons, — all the gilt gingerbread of improvisated sovereignty. To the simple child of rude Lancashire Dalesfolk it sounded so unreal! And what else had it proved? What remained of it? In the century we live in, the Eastern apologue of the palace and caravanserai has been exceeded. Modern Palaces resemble patent theatres;

which successive royal managers fill with elaborate machinery, glittering puppets, and gaudy scenes, only that themselves may become bankrupt, and their properties be carted away, and sold for a song!

It was pleasant, however, to Nannie, to find intermixed with these descriptions of plumed toques and laméd tunics, anecdotes of the singleness of purpose and rectitude of mind, the warm-heartedness and soft-heartedness of the great Napoleon, whom that mendacious organ, the public voice, still affected to describe as devoid of all bowels of compassion; and whom the world has since learned to recognise as one who, like Lucifer son of the morning, might have been a spirit of light, but for the overweening ambition which hurled him down into darkness.

She liked, too, to hear of the whimsical taste which governed the laborious trifling of those gorgeous days; the celebrated quadrille, devised for the amusement of Queen Hortense, in which the dancers were habited like the pieces of a game of chess; — the hunting-parties at Raincy, where the beauties of the court followed the chase, some attired as amazons in *habits de chasse à la Louis XIV.*, some as *élégantes*, in tiny pony-phaetons and chip bonnets; the little old gossips interchanging hints of how each of them had triumphed on such occasions; and what charming little compliments and exquisite bouquets and bon-bons had been lavished on them by such eaters of hearts as Canouville, Septeuil, Ségur, and

the two Charleses, de Flahault and Lagrange — names which they evidently considered of European reputation, and as nobly illustrative of the Napoleonic era, as those of Denon, David, Cuvier, Talma, Lannes, Savary, Marmont, or Berthier.

How true, alas! the trite saying, that one half the world knows not how the other half lives! How little had Nannie Balfour dreamed, in her dairy at Gridlands, that amidst the terrible wars which desolated Europe, Paris had revelled unceasingly in the base enjoyment of finery, gluttony, and all other costly ostentations, by which, according to the shallow calculations of political economists, we grease the axles of Trade, — that car of Jaggernaut of the modern world.

“But how,” she could not help inquiring, one day, of the little, wrinkled, coquettish blonde, Anatolie St. Martin, “how, when news was reaching you of that terrible retreat from Moscow, or later, of the carnage of Leipsig, — how could you have the heart to persist in your masked balls, or festivities at the Hôtel de Ville?”

“Because it was *his* pleasure,” exclaimed both Madame Duménil and her dear Anatolie, for once unanimous. “There was but one will in Paris — that of the Emperor. It was his command that the court should appear free from care or anxiety, and we consequently entertained none.”

The young recluse of the Strada della Longara, whose ear, since she arrived on the continent, had caught

some rumour of the dislocated state of the *chose publique* around the tottering throne of the elder Bourbons, could not help forming an opinion that France would never again be reduced to the state of semicatalepsy alone capable of subduing its volcanic elements, and thereby securing public order and private prosperity, unless by the despotism of a master-spirit, as potent and as remarkable for its *Vielseitigkeit* as that of Napoleon Bonaparte — and equally unscrupulous.

But what most surprised her, was the moderate share exercised by the human affections throughout the vicissitudes deplored by the two old worldlings. Madame Duménil often alluded to the shock she had received on learning the death of her Colonel, — a man so distinguished, — a man who in so short a time had made his way; — who, if he had survived a few months, would have been a General of Brigade, and, if a few years, probably a Field Marshal; a man brave as his sword, and universally esteemed.

It was not difficult for Miss Balfour to express her sympathy in such a loss.

“But then,” added she, “I had such consolations! — The Empress wrote me, with her own hand, a letter of condolence! — The Emperor despatched to me Duroc, his favourite aide-de-camp to say that the widow of his faithful Duménil should always command his sympathy. After that, *who* would not have been consoled!”

On the other hand, Mademoiselle St. Martin appeared

to have been as easily comforted for the loss of her *fiancé*, as the widow for that of her Colonel: a young *savant*, carried off by the yellow fever in a scientific mission to the Antilles. At a subsequent reception of the *Académie des Sciences*, at the Tuileries, Napoleon had pronounced, in a few blunt words, the eulogy of the defunct. — “Had he survived,” added the withered little spinster, “he would have had the *croix d’honneur*, and an appointment as *Bibliothécaire* either at the Arsenal or some other of the imperial libraries; and, alas! I should not have been reduced to nurse for my subsistence a superannuated lapdog.”

Such appeared to be her only motive for deploring the lost lover of her youth!

But “might she not be as blameable as themselves,” Miss Balfour sometimes asked herself, (with the morbid self-scrutinising spirit of one ill at ease in her mind, or insecure in her faith,) for assigning too much importance to the affections as a motive of human action, as they for assigning too little? — Was she justified in having devoted the best years of her life to the influence of a passion, whose mastery over her feelings no exorcism appeared to affect?”

In vain did she endeavour to divert her mind by listening to the gossip of Madame Duménil and poor old Anatolie, as other women to the unmeaning twittering of a canary in a cage. In vain did she attempt to elevate

her thoughts to the lofty level of the mystic doctrines propounded by the Abbate. Still, whether listening to the flowery reminiscences of the two old Frenchwomen, or the solemn expositions of the plausible Jesuit, she was unable to afford them more than the semblance of attention. From herself, she could not disguise that her hope of obtaining spiritual enlightenment, arose from the expectation of uniting, at some future time, her faith with that of Maurice; or that the accomplishments to which she aspired, purported only to obtain the applause of that rich and deep-toned voice, which came back upon her memory amid the watches of the night, startling her from sleep like the booming of a distant tocsin. — Humiliating consciousness! — to be not only a slave, but the slave of a shadow.

But while thus reasoning with herself concerning her soul's weakness, the crafty priest to whom her foot of clay had been unwillingly exposed, spared no pains to turn the discovery to account. Aware that Miss Balfour received no visits, it was useless to propose the negotiation of an acquaintance between her and certain venerable Roman *Principesse*, faithful daughters of the true church, and mothers, sisters, or favourites of Eminences or Monsignori, whom he had often found potent auxiliaries in cases of conversion. But he had little difficulty in persuading his charming pupil to attend, accompanied by Madame Duménil, those imposing Easter ceremonies at St. Peter's, to which our sight-seeing

country-people are only too apt to rush, as to a new opera, or public execution.

The Colonel's widow was enchanted at obtaining even this concession to what she called the claims of society; for in the august mysteries of an ancient faith, Madame Duménil saw only an assemblage of well-dressed people. In all countries, may be found a species of religious dissipation; from the camp meetings of America to the "Pious Orgies" of Exeter Hall; — from the fashionable conventicles of Belgravia, where noble lords, smitten with the ambition of expounding what they utterly misunderstand,

— rush in, where Bishops fear to tread, —

to the Paschal ceremonies of Jerusalem or Moscow, or, the Holy Week at St. Peter's.

For some time after the re-opening of the continent, the proceedings of English travellers, on the latter occasion, used to consist of an unmeaning display of vulgar, noisy curiosity, much resembling that of the House of Commons when bursting like schoolboys into the Lords, to listen to a speech from the throne. But since Catholic Emancipation gave the signal for conversion or perversion to such unquiet spirits as, weary of the simple worship of their forefathers, are tempted to retrograde into the errors of the dark ages, and revive delusions exploded by the ordeal of the printing press, Rome keeps a careful eye on such wonder-mongering travellers as ap-

pear most accessible to the dramatic exposition of her mysteries, — her lugubrious Miserere, and Calvaries of pasteboard: — aware that the most logical tract, or eloquent homily, is powerless compared with the incense, lustral water, and gorgeous processions, which she borrowed from the ritual of the Pagan to disfigure the simplicity of primitive Christianity; just as the ceremony of kissing the toe of his Holiness was copied from the court ceremonies of Caligula.

In our own time, the increasing influence of her altars has created a sort of jealous rivalry among those whose faith is fluttering; a rivalry as of courtiers elbowing each other to obtain a riband, or a pension; and scandals the most malicious are circulated in the city of that infallible Potentate, of whom it was said by Voltaire, that there was no danger in saluting his toe so long as we were able to fetter his hands. Spiteful letters are despatched home by English gossips, certifying which of their country-people have been escorted by Monsignore this, or have dined with Cardinal the other, or been seen in conference with the Regent of the Apostolic Chancery.

At the epoch of Miss Balfour's sojourn, this unholy inquisition was already established. People were beginning to watch to whom the best places were assigned for the ceremonies in St. Peter's; as they would have watched in Paris, at a *première représentation*, the occupants of an *avant scène*. When it was observed that the

honours of the day devolved, as far as the Great British were concerned, on a simply-attired girl in deep mourning, attended by her *gouvernante*, and a dry-looking, middle-aged baronet, dressed like Harley in a popular farce, it was settled that *they* were to be the great converts of the year.

Poor Sir Ralph Barnardiston, foiled in all his previous speculations, was in truth a candidate for the benefits of conversion. He would have been thankful to the most insignificant Jesuit going, to undertake him. But his modes of living were too strictly in accordance with the amount of his letter of credit on Torlonia, to afford much temptation. Even the Catholic church could not afford to charter a fishing-vessel (for men) in order to land a minnow.

It was otherwise with Miss Balfour. As in all cases where a marriageable person is concerned, her fortune had been enormously exaggerated. Most English people who possess more than the means of maintenance, are considered on the Continent as *millionnaires*; and, thanks to the inflated representations of Mademoiselle St. Martin, and the tribe of Warburton Wast, Miss Balfour passed in Rome for what she really was in Middledale, — an heiress.

Which of us has not witnessed the influence of that name, in attracting followers and parasites? And if so potential as to beautify ugliness, and rejuvenise middle age, in the case of a beautiful girl of nineteen, the at-

traction was indeed superlative. Poor Nannie was almost terrified by the curiosity she excited, when respectfully conducted by her Abbate to the prominent seats secured for herself and Madame Duménil. Had it been still in her power, she would gladly have escaped from the well-dressed crowd, whose gaping, staring, and whispering, is so much more offensive than the open-mouthed wonder of a mob.

"*Remets toi, mon enfant,*" whispered Madame Duménil, by no means certain, however, whether the murmur of applause that greeted them, was addressed to her own fashionable bonnet, or the sweet pale face, rendered almost as indistinguishable by a black crape veil as by the coif of a nun. And great was her joy when her young charge, whom she was beginning to believe as friendless in the world as though she had slid down from Heaven like a shooting star, was suddenly accosted by two persons as well placed as themselves: *i. e.* the man of many missions, and a young, pretty, and fashionably-dressed female, whose desire to salute Miss Balfour with a holy kiss, in scriptural fashion, was only too apparent.

Even Nannie, however, was at a loss to account for this violent demonstration of affection: so totally had she forgotten a certain Rose Pierce, one of her Manchester school-fellows, who, belonging to the *haute aristocratie* of the cotton world, had always looked down with condescension on the niece of Hildyard and Co. For even Manchester has its *crème de la crème*. The Holy Roman

Empire must not pretend to the exclusive monopoly of impertinence.

The Pierces, possessed of a house that vied with Greenhill Lodge in forcing-houses and conservatories, and far exceeded it in the display of pictures and plate, had refused to sanction the friendship struck up by their pretty daughter with the niece of "people" who, in the memory of man, and even of child, had belonged to the retail trade of Manchester. For wholesale and retail confer, in certain localities, the same personal distinction, as in the courts of kings, the precedence of Dukes, Viscounts, or Knights of the Garter; forming, what the Emperor of the French, when he was still the clever fellow called Louis Napoleon, was pleased to denominate "the Hierarchy of a Democracy."

But Rose, at once sweet and blooming as became the name she bore, had never forgotten the demure little friend who, though a year or two younger than herself, had so often guided her through the intricacies of Punic or Lancastrian wars; or even athwart the immensities of the solar system or milky way. Nannie Balfour, who had "done" half her lessons for her, and shared her whole heart, remained as dear as though she had not been a farmer's daughter, or a clothier's niece. In spite of parental prohibition, Rose had made secret inquiries as to the cause of her unexpected non-return; but after ascertaining that the sudden death of her mother was for the future to detain Nannie at home, she could learn

nothing further. The Hildyards, having quitted Manchester for the South, were settled, as her Pacolet informed her, "som'as about Bristol Hotwells, for the benefit and edication of young Master H."

Her dear Nannie consequently remained for Rose Pierce as intangible as any other of the pleasures of memory. She knew not her address; and had she known it, correspondence was prohibited between the daughter of a cotton-spinner employing two thousand hands and entertaining Members of Parliament at his table, and the daughter of an illiterate farmer, employing a couple of plough-boys; and in process of time, after shining as the belle of a music-meeting and a winter of public balls, Rose Pierce became the happy and envied wife of the eldest son of one of those cotton lords, who are rapidly converting Manchester into a second capital.

A year's travel having been injudiciously sanctioned by parental authority to the young couple, in order to settle their love and unsettle their minds, Mrs. George Stodart was enjoying its last few weeks at Rome, and exhibiting at St. Peter's a gorgeous pelisse of velvet and fur, and a pink bonnet plumed like the head of a Peruvian; when, lo! she caught sight of a quiet little Englishwoman, who proved to be the object of her girlish friendship, and subsequent dreams. — Tears of joy were still glittering in her eyes, when, after incoherently announcing her marriage, she presented her dear George to the acquaintance of her dear Nannie.

Dear George, however, a provincial dandy of the first flagrancy, out of whom a university education had been insufficient to winnow the natural vulgarity, was far from sharing his wife's exultation. Vexed that, in the midst of the unconcealed admiration excited by her beauty and false air of fashion, she should dethrone herself by such vehement demonstrations of intimacy with a shabby-looking little nobody, dressed after the pattern of the nursery-governess of his younger sisters, not even the sweet smile bestowed upon him from under that quizzical black bonnet could disarm his disgust. Of what use for him to push his way into fashionable clubs, or attempt that of his lovely wife into diplomatic soirées, if she showed so little tact as to rout out every discreditable acquaintance she had formed in the mêlée of a Manchester boarding-school! *He* had carried off from Harrow and Oriel, if not prizes and premiums, a bowing-acquaintance with half-a-dozen honourables, and a baronet; nay, was even privileged, or fancied himself so, to address Lord Bernard Bruce as "Bruce" by itself, "Bruce," whenever he ran against him in a railway-station. — "It would never do, however — they should never get on in society — if Rose was always to be putting on the drag by harking back to nobodies."

But it was in vain that, by nudges of the elbow and expressive jerks of the head, he endeavoured to detach his simple wife from her humble friend, and force her into a more prominent position. — Rose was as

elated as any other happy child. Of all the thousands who that day crowded the most 'gorgeous of modern temples, or, as it might be more appropriately termed, the most gorgeous Palace of the Almighty wherein enlightened Christendom is proud to compete with the barbaric worship of Benares, Mexico, or Peru, the individual who, even more than His Holiness himself, engrossed the sympathies of Mrs. George Stodart, was the Nannie who had corrected her Italian exercises, and mended rents in her torn frocks.

The consequence was, that throughout the ceremony of the morning, whose variegated splendours appeared to create in the grand old cathedral an interminglement of suns and rainbows, the countenance of the Manchester beau remained black as night. There was young Lord Garstang, the clever son of the great Earl of Mardyke, looking on, with whom, at Oxford, he had kept up a hunting-field acquaintance, by the interchange of a few words (two out of three being oaths) as they followed each other through some ugly gap, and whose eye he had been endeavouring to catch for the chance of recognition; and what hope of such an honour, so long as his wife was seen in familiar conference with snobs!

When at length the ceremony of the day came to a conclusion, when the incense was dying away, and the promiscuous throng pressing with indecent tumult along the aisles to call for carriages, on such occasions never to be found, the conjugal storm preparing for her began

to growl in the ears of poor Rose; hurried on against her will, in order to distance her insignificant friends, and their seedy escort in the three-cornered hat. When, suddenly, she found herself detained by a hand, laid gently upon her velvet sleeve, and on turning round, found, to her dismay, that Miss Balfour, closely following her, had probably overheard her dear George's sharp allusions to "nobodies," and "the vulgarity of greetings in the market-place." — Nor did dear George appear much inclined to moderate his animadversions, on perceiving that "those people seemed resolved to stick to them for the day."

"I have been endeavouring to keep up with you, Rose," said Nannie's gentle voice, "in order to present to you and Mr. Stodart, an English gentleman, Sir Ralph Barnardiston, who is anxious to make your acquaintance."

Miss Balfour was careful not to say, as is too often rashly said on such occasions, "my friend" Sir Ralph: for towards no one did she feel less friendly. — She would even have added a word or two expressive of her regret that his importunity rendered the introduction inevitable. But the baronet was too near for more than the mutual namings and bows, that purported to unite in friendship the man of many missions and the velvet pelisse and well-cut paletôt, which, to his sagacious eye, announced corn, wine, and oil in the territory of their wearers.

Had not Miss Balfour been too much in fear of being parted in the crowd from Madame Duménil and the Abbate, to bestow much heed on this little episode, she could not but have remarked the sudden transition from dark to light in the countenance of Rose's husband, like summer lightning gleaming from a thundercloud.

The truth was, that the tall Englishman in the straight-cut black coat which Sir Ralph had assumed as the badge of his new mission, had long been known to George Stodart by sight, at the Torlonia soirées and diplomatic receptions. At first, he had fancied him a travelling Fellow of All Souls; next, a missionary, high in the confidence of no matter what church. But was this vocation reconcilable with his whispers to cardinals, and congees to the *Maestro di Camera* of the Papal See? —

That morning he had noticed the mysterious stranger conducting the French ambassadress to her place; and was beginning to wonder whether he might not be one of the incognito kings, or their still greater ministers, against whom he had been, to his infinite delight, occasionally jostled in the course of his continental tour, when his self-sought introduction, under the title of Sir Ralph Barnardiston, resolved the doubts of the delighted cotton prince.

He heard of Sir Ralph, indeed, for the first time. He might be a Nova Scotia baronet, or K. G. B., or even a be-knighted sheriff. — But having seen him on speak-

ing terms with Lord Garstang, smiled upon by an ambassador, and tolerated by one of the most important of those ecclesiastical princes whom the Manchester gent facetiously denominated the "Old Hats," his acquaintance was evidently a thing to be thankful for.

Scarcely had cards been exchanged between them, when he proposed to Rose to invite to dinner the friend of her friend; to meet the Warburton Wasts, and what he called the "erleet" of their acquaintance.

"And Nannie!" cried his wife, overjoyed. "It will be just the opportunity to show some attention to my dear Nannie."

"If you want to be civil to her, ask her and the old Frenchwoman here, some day, when we are alone," remonstrated her husband. "You could not possibly invite two women whom we meet nowhere, to make the acquaintance of so fastidious a person as Mrs. Warburton Wast!"

"Nannie is fifty times more ladylike than the Warburton Wasts. — As to Madame Duménil, she was formerly in the household of the French Queen of Holland."

"Nonsense! — How *could* there be a French Queen of Holland! — She has just the look of a superannuated actress, and is, probably, little better."

"But her late husband was a Colonel of Napoleon's Guard!"

"And do you really think I would bring any one

connected with those despicable adventurers, poisoners, and plunderers, into contact with Mrs. Warburton Wast, who is such a favourite at the court of Charles X., and invited to all the Duchesse de Berri's private balls? — It would be a downright insult!”

“But Nannie Balfour did not serve in Napoleon's army. An acquaintance with *her* would not injure the interests of Mrs. Wast —”

“Mrs. Warburton Wast —”

— “Warburton Wast, with the Duchesse de Berri or Charles X. — Do pray let me invite her.”

“As you please. Write and ask her, if you like. But I wash my hands of it. If the Warburton Wasts should cut us in consequence —”

Rose did not answer. She was deep in her note of invitation to Miss Balfour.

CHAPTER XXV.

"ROBERT and I are far from easy about you, my dear little friend," wrote Mrs. Brent, shortly after the foregoing adventure. — "We hear shocking reports of the Strada della Longara. There is a foolish Mrs. W. W. (the name is not worth writing at full length), a correspondent of my sister Cordelia, who protests that wherever you go, a flight of crows, alias Jesuits, alight around you; and that there can be little doubt of your speedy conversion to Catholicism. — If this should come to pass, take notice that you shall figure in effigy, next fifth of November, in the centre of Russell Square; and my pickle son, Arthur, shall set fire to the tar-barrel!

"Better have stayed at home, Nannie, among your well-wishers. You might have studied Ancient Rome in Piranesi, or the mouldy fragments of a Stilton cheese; instead of destroying on the spot your classical illusions. But while *you* have been incurring the criticisms of Mrs. W. W., I, the home-stayer, have made a charming acquaintance. Why never inform me that you have the honour to be cousin to the E. H., whose initials are becoming nearly as renowned as those of H. B.? With most people, the said E. H. passes for a myth. All men of mark and likelihood read his pamphlets — (tracts for

the law-makers, Robert Brent calls them). But every one ascribes the authorship to his pet philosopher. I have heard named Brougham, Peel, Bulwer, Carlyle, Copplestone, Jeffrey, Jeremy Bentham, Albany Fonblanque, and a dozen others, as the real original E. H. And, after all, this Great Unknown turns out to be a shadow of a man, diaphanous as a Sèvres coffee-cup, who is endeavouring to sun himself into vitality at Clifton, out of reach of the stir of life, or the breath of fame. And to your kinsmanship with this great writer, Nannie, you have never once alluded!

"Business, seldom so pleasant a mediator, brought him to our house. Some time ago, Mr. Hildyard purchased a considerable estate in Berkshire; and my husband was consulted by Zelters and Son concerning the title. Within these few weeks, some sort of legal demur having rendered him a little uneasy, Mr. Hildyard thought fit to visit London for a consultation with Robert; who, charmed with the intelligence and gentle manners of his client, invited him to dinner — an Englishman's readiest mode of saying 'I like you.'

"It happened, as it often does, that several first-rate men were that day our guests; and though middle-aged lawyers are a little too apt to pooh-pooh the abilities of a talker, or even listener, who has not cut his wisdom teeth, one and all were in favour of the young man to whose pale, gentle face they at once applied the comparison so often made with Shelley's and Byron's, to an

alabaster lamp. After dinner, just before I left the room, some allusion was made to the last essay of E. H. on Penal Colonisation. Some praised it — some abused it. One called it the splendid error of a man of genius; another declared it to be revolutionary and dangerous.

“‘I had rather have written it than Junius’s Letters,’ cried Robert Brent. — ‘Whoever E. H. may be, he is one of the shining lights of this generation, and not the less edifying for being hid under a bushel. We have all reason to be grateful to him. It was a grand boast of the ancient king, that he had found Rome of clay, and left it marble. But a man like E. H. accomplishes something more glorious, if he leave mankind the better and happier for his counsels. A rich inheritance to confer on posterity! The reforms suggested by him have been gradually adopted in every prison and penitentiary in the kingdom. The county magistrates, usually so inaccessible to reason, are beginning to swear by E. H.!’

“‘Everybody present confirmed this statement. Each had some illustrative anecdote to afford. Your cousin alone was mute.

“‘I trust your silence is no symptom of dissent, Mr. Hildyard?’ said Robert Brent, fearing that the conversation was taking too serious a turn for one probably better up in *Lalla Rookh* and the Scotch novels, than in *Prison Discipline* or the regeneration of Lunatic Asylums. ‘I should be sorry to find, as you are about to adopt the

life of a country gentleman in right earnest, that you are opposed to the opinions of E. H.'

"No one, I believe, has argued them over more patiently,' said he, with a look, half-pleased, half-guilty. 'I ought, perhaps, to have stopped you long ago. I ought to have declared myself at once. Be lenient with the vanity of human nature, which tempted me to sit and listen to praises such as I little anticipated would ever fall to my share. — *My* name is Elisha Hildyard. — My initials are E. H.'

"I leave you to guess whether the previous applause was moderated by this modest disclosure. But this *rara avis*, who writes like Courier, and thinks like St. Vincent de Paule, did not tarry long among his votaries. He soon followed me to the tea-table, to inquire after my father's ward, and thank me for what he was pleased to call my just appreciation of her. — *Your* praises seemed to gratify him, Nannie, far more than the golden opinions conceded to himself. But the reports of your Romish tendencies seem to shock and grieve him, more than they surprised.

"His mother, it seems, has fallen into a state of childishness; and this man of iron intellect attends her like the tenderest of nurses. — He is preparing to build on his new property, but will not reside there during the old lady's lifetime. 'I should hate any house,' he says, 'where I had seen her breathe her last. — My

new home will, I trust, be free from painful associations.'

"What a man! — Already, with the maternal foresight of which most mothers become guilty the moment their eldest daughter takes to plaiting her hair, I have marked him down as a husband for Nina. But what do you think of Robert's pretending, on the strength of a hint given him by my dear old father, that E. H. is a rejected suitor of yours, and still your devoted idolator!

"In that case, I say, more strenuously than ever, — why, *why* couldn't you stay at home?

"Your affectionate friend,

"H. BRENT."

Nannie's "affectionate friend H. Brent" had certainly afforded her "food for meditation," not perhaps "e'en to madness," but certainly even to a very uneasy frame of mind. In the first place, what business had these W. W.s to make her the subject of their idle gossip? She had never molested *them*, never intruded on their society. They were not entitled to bear witness against her. Why endeavour to injure her with her English friends?

Already, be it observed, Nannie was beginning to resent as an injury the imputation that she was about to enter the Catholic church. Her sojourn in Rome had, in fact, operated upon her mind in a manner precisely contrary to the usual influence of the place. English

residents of the highest class, courting or forced into association with Italians of the highest class, and finding themselves in those lofty palaces and among those bigoted arch-nobles, still tacitly repudiated as heretics, and regarded nearly as abhorrently as when the Holy Inquisition kept its racks and stakes and thumbscrews in perpetual readiness, gradually incline their hearts to the enervating influence of such an atmosphere. The wild elephant is marched off between two tame ones. By conversion to the Catholic church, the only obstacle to Lady Facile Princeps's intimacy with the Prince or Princess Ludovico Pallavicini is removed; while, as a Papist, the lovely daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Snooks may wed with a Duke Orsino, like Olivia in the play; every thing is "made pleasant" by the interposition of some able Jesuit, possessed of a talent for winding up spiritual accounts.

But it is not so with persons who sit aloof from external pressure; seeking enlightenment from above, and not daring to trifle with the means of their soul's salvation. Poor Nannie had arrived in Rome, desiring to be convinced that all she had heard of the mysteries of the Christian faith from the lips of her first and only love, was more authentic than the simple expositions of the good old Pairson. She *wanted* a bridge to be thrown over the great gulf that divided her from Maurice. Once thrown, her foot, timid as it was, would have trodden steadily over the abyss.

But this purpose was unachieved. Doctrines which, expounded by her young companion, with the aid of his commanding voice and earnest eyes, amid the broomy thickets or purple moors of Middledale, — its summer breezes freshening her brow as she listened, — the twilight skies lending the impressive illustration of their brightening stars to his representation of the promises of his faith and superior holiness of his church, — had stirred her inmost soul, — lost half their augustness when enounced by the crabbed logic of the Abbate Bartolomeo; whose voice resembled the creakings of an ill-greased cart-wheel, and who illustrated his arguments with a finger outstretched in the attitude of a Neapolitan charm; the vehemence of which digital eloquence served to scatter volumes of snuff upon her writing table. Never was human being less qualified by nature for the task of proselytism than the poor Abbate.

His very manner was aggravating. His mode of assertion prompted opposition. A predisposition to mistrust the sanctity of a creed so harshly and arrogantly interpreted, deprived his arguments of all moral influence.

Even the imposing grandeurs of the Romish ritual had for once proved unimpressive. The united triumph of all that the arts have produced of greatest and most effective, — *chefs-d'œuvre* of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, — were defeated by that tendency to stage-effect which becomes contemptible when connected with the supreme glories of Religion. Accustomed to

derive *her* testimony of the greatness of God from the uprising and down-setting of the sun, her incense from the breath of nature, her conception of His terrors from the mountain storm, of His goodness from the plenteousness of the created earth, of His choir from the warble of the woods, the murmur of the stream, — the winking lamps of cathedrals, the squeaking treble of human choristers, the deep diapason of rumbling organs and double drums, appeared to the simple mind of Nannie almost profane: — a vulgar parody of the pure and simple grandeur which had hitherto served to exalt her fervent aspirations.

The most earnest appeal of cousin Ely could not have produced a stronger revulsion of feeling than those tawdry exhibitions at St. Peter's; those displays of brocade and lace, of tinsel, gems, and tapestry, more suitable to the worship of Mumbo Jumbo, or the Delhai Lama, than to the God of all goodness, whose word was preached in the wilderness by one whose raiment was of camel's hair, and whose food, locusts and wild honey.

Had she not reason, therefore, to be displeased at finding herself represented to those whose good opinion she valued, as the victim of Jesuitical machination and of her own weakness?

More startling, however, though far more satisfactory, was the information imparted by Mrs. Brent relative to the renown of E. H. It was incredible. It was impossible. Such a spirit as was universally ascribed to

that great social reformer, must have rent asunder the slender frame of cousin Ely! Like Alfonso's ghost in the Castle of Otranto, its expansion would have laid in ruins the structure it inhabited. That infirm boy, by whose couch she had so often watched, — that gentle youth, whose feeble voice had so often recited to her the lyrics of Mrs. Hemans, or the stanzas of Macaulay, — *he*, an authority on prison discipline, on the reformation of criminals, the management of lunatics? Mrs. Brent, in one of her fits of wayward eccentricity, must have resolved to hoax and mislead her.

While still musing over the letter, her perplexities concerning which would have been as insolvable by the aid of poor Madame Duménil as if she had addressed herself for counsel to one of the carved caryatides supporting the architrave of her chamber door, a cheerful voice saluted her ear, and her friend Rose was by her side — when they were alone together, always “Rose;” when they met in public under the observation of the Manchester dandy, “Mrs. George Stodart.”

“You must not be angry with me for coming so early, Nannie,” said she, throwing herself breathless into a seat. “George is out with the hounds; and I wanted to make sure of you during his absence. I was half afraid, yesterday, dearest, that I should never have an opportunity of seeing you again.”

“Do you leave Rome, then, so soon?” inquired the unsuspecting Nannie.

"Oh, no! We have our apartments for some weeks longer."

"I shall be here at least as long!" rejoined Miss Balfour. "What is the impediment to our meeting?"

"Simply my husband's caprice. George allows himself to be guided by any body and every body, instead of listening to reason."

"By reason, meaning yourself."

"In this case, yes! What can he possibly have to say against you? And why deny me the society of the only person in Rome for whom I have the smallest regard? I do not interfere with *his* infatuation for the Warburton Wasts or Lord Garstang."

"Do you mean," said Miss Balfour, reddening, "that Mr. Stodart entertains some objection to your intimacy with me? Then why, dear Rose, are you here?"

"Because I can't help it — because I love you with all my heart," cried the affectionate girl, snatching up the hand of Nannie, and covering it with kisses. "I feel so lonesome in Italy, away from papa and mamma, and my brothers and sisters; and, till I met you, Nannie Balfour, and heard English spoken once more by a voice to which I was accustomed, I was miserable in Rome — yes, miserable! Pictures, statues, antiquities, festivals — what are they all to me? And now, because I have found an old friend, with whom I can talk and think, and feel —"

The climax was supplied by a copious burst of tears.

Miss Balfour had acquired from poor Eugénie de Lanville and Madame Duménil the notion that all feminine griefs are to be assuaged by a glass of water containing that potent calmative, a few drops of orange-flower water! But alas! on the present occasion the nostrum proved ineffectual. Rose sipped and sobbed, and sobbed and sipped; but became neither more composed nor more coherent.

"It is all that abominable Mrs. Warburton Wast," she faltered. "But first tell me, Nannie, who is the Sir Ralph Osbaldiston whom you introduced to us?"

"Barnardiston."

"Well, Barnardiston. His name don't much signify. It is his nature I want to hear about. Why is he your enemy? What did you ever do to him?"

Miss Balfour made no reply, except by a blush that rose to her temples. Even to an old schoolfellow, there was no need to explain that, having fallen in love at first sight with her fortune, the baronet had made such pretensions to her hand as, but for her instant discountenance, would have become an offer of marriage.

"You don't answer me; which confirms me in my notion, that the hatred of a bitter old bachelor like Sir Ralph has its origin in envy and malice."

"But how can I have excited his envy or malice?"

"He is old, ugly, and disagreeable; you are young

and loveable," was Rose's cursory summing up. "As you introduced him to us, I naturally supposed him to be your friend," continued she, perceiving that Miss Balfour waited for further explanations. "So, when he was dining with us the other day, to meet Lord Garstang and the Warburton Wasts, I mentioned to him, as he sat by me at table, how sorry I was that you declined all society, and that I had vainly endeavoured to persuade you to join the party. Upon which Mrs. Warburton Wast, who has a habit of chiming in with everybody's conversation (it may be manners, but *I* don't think so, Nannie!), remarked that — but I hardly like to tell you what she said."

"Pray do," replied Miss Balfour, with a still deeper blush than before. "The criticism of such a woman may prove a wholesome corrective."

"Well then, she observed that I must have baited my trap with something grand indeed, to catch such a very fastidious young lady as Miss Balfour. She said you had brought letters to her from one of her near relations, and that she had called upon you, and invited and invited you (you never told me *that*, Nannie!). But that you had treated her and her invitations with the utmost contempt!"

"Simply by declining them, on the plea of family mourning."

"So I concluded. But Sir Ralph chose to infer everything that was disparaging, shrugged his shoulders,

and curled his lip, like an old ape as he is; and inquired whether we were aware of the real condition in life of the young lady who gave herself such airs? A *parvenue* — a mere *parvenue* — the daughter of a small farmer, little better than a cottar; born and bred in a rude hamlet of North Lancashire. I was about to deny the charge of 'bred,' Nannie, but a frown from George silenced me."

"But, my dear Rose, why so angry with this man?" replied Nannie, calmly. "Excepting the airs with which he charges me, all he advanced is true."

"But there are ways of telling even the truth; and his sneer was so cutting. Besides, he added — dare I tell you, Nannie? — that your parents were originally servants in a family of his acquaintance."

"True, again."

Even Rose was staggered. This was degradation in the scale of society which she could hardly bear to attach to her friend.

"But what of all this?" said Nannie, rallying her courage in proportion as that of her weaker-minded friend became depressed. "If I had ever pretended to be a great lady, or had even intruded among great ladies, the lowliness of my birth might be charged against me. But I have scrupulously refrained from society; and my life of seclusion ought to have secured me from these ungenerous attacks."

Rose Stodart could offer no argument, either in assent

or dissent: — she could only *cry* her sympathy, and persist in her evidence.

“I should not have cared for the spiteful man’s nonsense,” said she, “because I know better than he does what you *are*, Nannie; which signifies rather more than whom you are! But that Mrs. Warburton Wast put herself into such a state of excitement as caused all her bracelets to jingle, and her plumes to waver; while she declared that she would never forgive her cousin, Mrs. Something or other, for having given letters of introduction to *her*, to a vulgar *parvenue*. But was Sir Ralph certain of the fact?”

“‘I can simply assure you, madam,’ said he, ‘that I was myself entertained in the parlour of Miss Balfour’s parents, on bread and butter, in the manufacture of which this fastidious young lady had assisted.’”

“‘If *I* had partaken, sir, of their bread and salt,’ interrupted Lord Garstang, who had been sitting by, all this time, an amused auditor of the whole history, ‘I should have felt that a padlock was on my lips.’”

“Sir Ralph did not seem to mind. He was busy helping himself to all the truffles in the dish before him.

“‘But where is this fair manufacturer of bread and butter to be seen?’ added Lord Garstang, addressing me in a half whisper. ‘Middledale adjoins my father’s property; nay, I believe we claim it as our own, when we have nothing else to do. I am a professed protector of native industry; and have many other reasons for

wishing to make the acquaintance of so charming a neighbour as Miss Balfour.'

"So you see, dear Nannie," added Rose, renewing her caresses, "I have a new friend to propose, to fill my place. For (I am ashamed — I am wretched to own it — but I *must*) George has actually interdicted any further communication between us."

"And yet, you are here!"

"I am here to explain — to apologise — to entreat your forgiveness. I would do so on my knees, Nannie, only that I know you are too high-minded to care for such homage. I am still in hopes that George will come to his senses; that he will see the baseness of being controlled by the idle talk of a man of whom he knows nothing, except that his name is in the baronetage."

"It matters little!" said Nannie, well aware that Sir Ralph was as likely to arraign, in the sphere of such people as the Mardykes and Garstangs, the pretensions of the Stodarts themselves, as Manchester cotton-spinners, not of the first class, — as to depreciate herself. "You will not love me the less, Rose, for finding that I am only what you always knew me to be. As I never pretended to the favour of Mrs. Warburton Wast, or the respect of Sir Ralph Barnardiston, it is no mortification to find that I sail in the north of their opinion. But do not, dear Rose, endanger your domestic quiet, or expose me to blame, by persisting in what your husband has

forbidden. Do not place *me* under the necessity of interdicting your visits."

"You would not — you *could* not!" cried Mrs. Stodart, throwing her arms round the neck of Miss Balfour. "I, to whom you have been so kind, and who love you so dearly."

"Best for us both!" sighed Nannie, almost overcome by a struggle for which she had been so little prepared.

"But what am I to do? I have promised Lord Garstang to bring him here. *He* is superior to being influenced by a paltry backbiter, like Sir Ralph Barnardiston! As to the Warburton Wasts, or, as *he* calls them, the Warburton Wasps, I assure you they lick the varnish off his boots."

"I should have thought that such a cynic as I have heard Lord Garstang described, would scorn to *wear* varnished boots."

"Oh, he belongs completely to his class; laughs at it, but abjures none of its customs."

"Then don't bring him here, dear Rose," said Miss Balfour. "If I made an exception to my rule of forming no new acquaintance, it ought not to be in favour of one of whom I know nothing, except that he is a supercilious young lord —"

"And most agreeable, and the son of a country neighbour," added Mrs. Stodart.

"My neighbour only in so far that a few acres of mine abut upon many thousands of his. In the scriptural

sense, we are no more neighbours than if he lived in the moon. No, dear Rose, since I am to renounce the pleasure of your friendship, you must not deposit a strange bird in my nest."

In vain did Mrs. Stodart propose a variety of plans for eluding the prohibition of her husband. She readily gave up Lord Garstang. It was immaterial to her whether Nannie consented or not to accept his proffered friendship. But it was a real grief to find, on taking leave of Miss Balfour, that unless her friendship were fully authorised by the head of the house, it must fall into the category of things that had been.

Gnats and mosquitoes are contemptible insects; but any one who has suffered under their venomous sting, will appreciate the irritation poor Nannie had to endure from the attacks of these human persecutors, — equally trivial — equally tormenting.

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